

Good Reads 2018: the 22nd Edition

The Bates College Non-Required Reading List
for Leisure Moments



Entries are in alphabetical order by submitter, and their name appears at the bottom of the last title submitted.

Thanks to Post & Print for supplying the coveted printed versions and to the College Store for distributing those versions and posting online.

Until next year,

Alison Keegan, Dean of the Faculty's office

"Reading is the sole means by which we slip, involuntarily, often helplessly, into another's skin, another's voice, another's soul."

~Joyce Carol Oates~

Meet Your Next Favorite Book

Ready Player One by Ernest Cline

My nephew suggested I read this book, and with all the hype that surrounded it, I decided to try it. I liked it. I didn't drop dead LOVE it, but it was fun enough to keep me reading. The plot is based on a dystopian world in which there isn't much left to enjoy, so people spend their time in the virtual world of Oasis, where an old computer maven (read geek) has hidden an "Easter Egg". The person who figures out the clues and finds the egg first wins a lot of money and control of Oasis. There are lots of references to music, computer games and TV shows of the 1980's, and it's fun to reminisce about some of those (once you get over the shock of realizing that the 1980s were 38 years ago.....how did that happen?) Read the book before you see the movie or you will miss things, and definitely see the movie in 3-D!

Lee Abrahamsen, Biology

I just finished and enjoyed **Dan Brown's** new book **Origin**, the latest in the DaVinci Code series. <http://danbrown.com/origin/>. Also have started and am enjoying **David Baldacci's Camel Club**

series <http://davidbaldacci.com/books/camel-club/>.

Jim Bauer, ILS

Defending Jacob by William Landry

This is a page turner, you won't want to put it down . Landry's other books are good as well.

Jane Bedard, retired colleague

We Are Never Meeting in Real Life: Essays by Samantha Irby

This is probably the best book I read in 2017. Irby blogs at Bitches Gotta Eat, and her work is honest, funny, and unapologetic.

I'm a big fan of queer young adult, and loved both **Autoboyography by Christina Luran** and **Carry On by Rainbow Rowell**.

Christina Bell, ILS

One light still shines by Marie Monville

Sandy Brooks, Facility Services

If you've watched the PBS series "Victoria", you might find **Queen Victoria's Little Wars by Byron Farwell** interesting.

Marita Bryant, Geology

Ninefox Gambit and Raven Strategem by Yoon Ha Lee

Mathematics, calendrical manipulation, and the minds of dead people inside the minds of the living.

Ancillary Justice, Ancillary Sword, Ancillary Mercy, and Provenance by Ann Leckie

Gender, distributed artificial intelligence, and the cultural importance of gloves and tea.

Hamish Cameron, Classical and Medieval Studies

The Game: Inside the Secret World of Major League Baseball's Power Brokers by Jon Pessah

I've been a baseball fan for a long time, but *The Game* allowed me to see baseball from a whole new perspective. It turns out that the games played by owners, politicians, general managers, and others behind the scenes might have been just as intriguing and interesting as the games played by players on the field. Pessah covers the strike-shortened 1994 season, the steroids era, the move to Moneyball-style management, the drive to fund new stadiums with taxpayer dollars in various cities, the infighting between owners and commissioners, MLB's response to 9/11, and much more. Truly eye opening and a must-read for baseball fans.

Jonathan Cavallero, Rhetoric

Jesmyn Ward's new novel, which won the National Book Award, is extraordinary: **Sing, Unburied, Sing**. Multiple narrators, some living and some dead, all in this world. Deep Mississippi and the long legacies of racism and Jim Crow. I'm very struck by how Ward writes about siblings taking care of each other in a terrifying and dangerous world.

The Rising by Ron Rash

Also about the south (North Carolina), family, long legacies and attempts to break free of/come to terms with the past. That sounds kind of cliched but Rash builds suspense and a psychological study quite effectively.

On Trails by Robert Moor

Non-fiction, fascinating series of chapters about creatures who make and follow trails (from ants to deer to elephants to humans), and how a trail can keep you alive. The book starts with an amazing story in which Moor - who was in his 20's and superbly fit after had just finishing the AT - headed out "off trail" in Newfoundland and promptly got profoundly lost.

Dream in Polar Fog by Yuri Rytkeu

Want to read something Russian that doesn't have anything to do with contemporary US politics? Rytkeu was a Chukchi (farthest northeast you can go in Siberia before hitting the Bering Straits). This is a novel written from the point of view of a late 19th century Canadian who gets left behind in Chukotka by his compatriots. Wonderful details of life and landscape.

Jane Costlow, Environmental Studies

Enlightenment Now by Steven Pinker

The subtitle is "The case for reason, science, humanism, and progress." I'm only 75% of the way through the book, but so far I've found its reliance on evidence to support an uncommonly optimistic perspective to be a tonic during pessimistic times.

Matt Côté, Chemistry and Biochemistry

The Forgotten Garden, The House at Riverton (The Shifting Fog), The Distant Hours, The Secret Keeper, The Lake House, all by Kate Merton.

This is my favorite author of late. All of her books will keep you guessing until the end and then make you want to go back and reread them for clues.

After the Eclipse: A Mother's Murder, a Daughter's Search by Sarah Perry

Deborah Cutten, Academic Administrative Services

When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi

I read this two months after my son died from cancer. Like my son, the author was a literature major in college; the author later became a top neurosurgeon until lung cancer ended his career and eventually his life. His first person account shares the story of a man impelled to explore the

depths of the human condition, first in literature, then in the workings of the brain. I found an unusual connection with the late author, whose fine writing articulated many of my own family's experiences and provided a kind of affirmation and catharsis. With good reason this unique book has been on the New York Times bestseller list for well over a year.

Deacon Frank Daggett, Multifaith Chaplaincy

After I read **The Sound of Gravel** last year, naturally I HAD to read **The Polygamist's Daughter by Anna LeBaron**. Both fascinating!

The Wild Inside by Christine Carbo

The Stars Are Fire by Anita Shreve

I bought this book, completely by coincidence, on the day Shreve died.

What Alice Forgot by Liane Moriarty

Not quite as good as **Big Little Lies**, but much better than **Truly Madly Guilty**.

Leaving Time by Jodi Picoult

Not her best, but compelling enough that I had to finish. I liked all the information about elephants.

Susan Dunning, Advancement

I'd like to highly recommend two books I've recently read, both about various dimensions of race, justice, and history in America:

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead (fiction)

Blood at the Root by Patrick Phillips (nonfiction)

Francis Eanes, Environmental Studies

Some of the books that made me think, this year:

The Stranger in the Woods (the extraordinary story of the last true hermit) by Michael Finkel

Based on the true story of our own, Maine hermit. Christopher Knight who left his home in Massachusetts in 1986, drove to Maine, and disappeared in the Maine woods for 27 years. Not because he had to, but because he chose to live that way. Makes you think about life.

The Man Who Planted Trees by Jim Robbins

True story about David Milarch. Part story. Part science. Lost groves, champion trees & an urgent plan to save the planet.

Me Before You by Jojo Moyes

Two unlikely people spend 6 months changing each other's lives. Romantic, sad, and thought provoking.

The Gifts of an Eagle by Kent Durden

True story of a Golden Eagle, "Lady". Ed & his son, Kent, caught, trained, filmed and learned from Lady for 16 years. Then set her free.

When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi

His story of going from a Neuro-surgeon/Neuro-scientist to a terminally ill patient with cancer, to his death.

Books to enjoy:

Elm Creek Quilts Novels by Jennifer Chiaverini

Inspector Armand Gamache Mysteries by Louise Penny

The Gray Whale Inn Series by Karen McInerney

The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes – Collection of British & American stories

Ellis Island and Other Stories by Mark Helpin

Book for young readers:

Ray's Violet: The Tale of a most Extraordinary Lightning Bug by Sharon Walrond Harris

Charming story of friendship, a care free summer & wishes can come true.

Melinda Emerson, ILS

The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories by Ken Liu

As someone who recently binged the Black Mirror series on Netflix and felt paranoid and misanthropic for weeks after, I really appreciated the hopeful contrast I found with Ken Liu's humanistic science fiction and fantasy. He writes not only about the "what if?" possibilities of life, but also the "what now?" He writes not only about how amazing things might be in the future, but he reminds us of how amazing things are today and have always been, not because of gadgets, but because of the people around us. When he writes about time travel, he reminds us that we are all time travelers now, together, a spark burning down a fuse. While he writes wonderfully about gee-whiz technology, he also reminds us that we live in a world in which thoughts can be transmitted across space and time using an amazing new app called a book. There is old magic in the world and new magic and present magic. Some of this magic is called science.

Nathan Faries, Asian Studies

I really liked Hans Fallada's novel, Every Man Dies Alone

Sylvia Federico, English

Norse Mythology by Neil Gaiman

As the name suggests, this is a modern retelling of Norse myths. The tales follow a loose chronology, beginning with the Norse creation story and ending with the apocalyptic legend of Ragnarok. While not a direct translation of the original stories, this book was an accessible

introduction for those who hadn't heard these tales before.

Artemis by Andy Weir

Andy Weir was on the Good Reads list several times last year with his earlier book, *The Martian*. With *Artemis*, Weir once again combines humor and science to tell the story of a young woman named Jazz, who lives within the first city on the moon. Jazz makes her money smuggling contraband into the city, until she's offered a job in corporate espionage. I found this book funny and thrilling, almost playing out like a heist movie in space.

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

A classic novel in the dystopian genre, *The Handmaid's Tale* explores questions of religion, gender, and identity through the lens of an oppressive society. This is a heavy but important read that holds up even thirty years after it was first published.

Atonement by Ian McEwan

Beginning on a fateful night in England just a few years before World War II, *Atonement* tells the story of a family turned upside down by one daughter's mistake. The book continues into the years that followed, showing the consequences of that one night. I liked McEwan's poetic language, as well as the way he showed the perspectives of multiple characters.

Shogun by James Clavell

This is technically fiction, but it is closely based on the life of the real historical figure William Adams, an English sailor who landed in Japan in the 17th century and became the first known Western samurai. The story follows his rise from prisoner to samurai, learning about Japanese

traditions in order to survive. This is a longer book, but it had enough action and political intrigue to keep my interest.

Dan Girling, Post and Print

An American Marriage by Tayari Jones

After a year of marriage, an African American couple — he a graduate of Morehouse, she of Spelman — confronts the husband's unjust conviction for a violent crime he did not commit. The novel explores how his imprisonment in a society of mass incarceration challenges their relationship. Sad, outrageous, and funny, this book offers a bow to Benjamin Mays, Bates Class of 1920.

Phyllis Graeber Jensen, Communications

The Wife Between Us, by Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen

Meg Gresh, Dean of the Faculty's office

I just finished **Kindred by Octavia E. Butler**. It was very interesting and took place in the days of slavery. Has quite the twist in the plot and was hard to put down. Also **Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson** was an absolutely wonderful book. **Go Set a Watchman by Harper Lee** was another book that I could not put down as well as **To Kill a Mockingbird**.

Laurie Grimmel, Post and Print

I recommend **Alexander Hamilton by Ron Chernow**. While it may be difficult to get tickets to "Hamilton" on Broadway, you can read the biography that inspired Lin-Manuel Miranda to create the musical. It is an exciting story of how a child born out of wedlock on an island in the British West Indies and who was orphaned in his teens, became one of the principal Founders of the United States. I was reading this at the same time as a friend of mine who observed: "I never would have made it off that island and, instead, would have died young in squalor and

ignorance, but I am not Hamilton."

Bruce Hall, ILS

I am a long time reader of this list but first time responder.

I have never been a mystery reader but then discovered the **Inspector Gamache** series by **Louise Penny**. It was recommended last year by Sarah Potter.

Start with **Still Life** and continue in order. I use the Maine Library system library loan system and go through a book every other week. The stories are interesting and not too dark. You get sucked into this quaint Canadian community and truly wish you could visit.

Jennifer Hartshorn, Athletics

I Will Send Rain by Rae Meadows

It took turns that were unexpected and unpredictable, and it worked fantastically. I loved every second spent reading it.

Nicole Hastings, Physics

For me, a shorter list, but this year seemed to bring clunkier books.

Below are the three that weren't:

The Immortal Irishman: the Irish Revolutionary Who Became an American Hero by Timothy Egan

Quite a life. A magnificent public speaker, Thomas Meagher rejected his family's comfortable Irish status in English-ruled Ireland, helped found and lead the "Young Ireland" movement after the famine, and was transported as a convict to Australia for his rabbleroxing. He escaped, made his way to the US, and raised and led an all-Irish regiment in the Union Army that, as immigrants, were used as cannon fodder and took frightful casualties in battle after battle. Appointed the acting governor

of Montana territory after the war, he disappeared overboard from a river boat under mysterious circumstances after resisting the land barons who controlled Montana.

The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary by Simon Winchester

Beautifully written. The editors of the OED encouraged people to send in suggestions for words that should be included, with both their linguistic derivation and sample usages to trace the various meanings of words. One of these volunteers, Dr. William Chester Minor, sent in thousands of carefully researched histories of words to the renowned James Murray, the OED's Scottish titanic intellect of an editor. After years of being put off from a thank-you visit to his mysterious contributor, Murray insisted and traveled into the English countryside, only to find that Dr. Minor, an American Civil War surgeon, had been held for over twenty years in a mental hospital for the criminally insane, after a murder in London.

Vietnam, A New History by Christopher Goscha

Goscha, a Canadian historian, has provided a fine new account that clearly lays out Vietnam's complex layers of interplay with neighboring empires and colonial forces. After an explanation of Vietnam's early history, most of the book deals with the modern struggles toward nationhood after 1858, the watershed created with the invasion by France. For me, the book was wonderful preparation for a month recently in Vietnam helping to design the Admissions and Financial Aid offices for what will be Vietnam's first liberal arts institution, Fulbright University Vietnam (<https://fuv.edu.vn/en/>), partly led by Ngan Dinh '02, the founding director of the Undergraduate College. But it is a perfect book as well for a general reader trying to move beyond seeing Vietnam through the narrow lens of what the Vietnamese call "The

American war."

Bill Hiss, Class of 1966, retired colleague

Nicola Upson's Josephine Tey detective novels. The first is titled **An Expert in Murder**. There are seven so far. If you are a fan of the classic British cozies (Dorothy Sayres, Ngaio Marsh, Agatha Christie, Josephine Tey) you will enjoy these tremendously. The heroine is Tey, the British detective novelist for people who don't like detective novels. They are set between the First and Second World Wars and do a wonderful, moody description of the consequences of the wars in British society. The plotting is good. The characters are excellent.

Fatal Discord by Michael Massing

A popularizing history/bio of two of the great thinkers in the emergence of Protestant religion(s) in the sixteenth century. Well written and enjoyable.

Broad Band: by Claire Evans

This is a fascinating and sometimes infuriating history of the role women played in the development of the internet and the reason for their erasure from most histories of the technology. If you liked Hidden Figures you will like this.

The Birthday Party: A Memoir of Survival by Stanley Alpert

True story: an assistant United States Attorney is kidnapped in Manhattan. The author and victim of the crime has a sometimes annoying authorial tone: terrified in the moment, smug in retrospect - but it is a completely wild story and if you like true crime as a genre, you'll like this.

Margaret Imber, Dean of the Faculty's office and Classical & Medieval Studies

Pacific Crucible by Ian W. Toll

Excellent history of WWII in the Pacific

Michael Jones, History

The Firebrand and the First Lady: Portrait of a Friendship: Pauli Murray, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Struggle for Social Justice by Patricia Bell-Scott

I knew next to nothing of the activist, Pauli Murray, and so deepened my knowledge of her plus witnessed the remarkable relationship between these two important women of the last century.

A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles

An historical fiction, light on historic depth, of 20th century Russia told through the life and relationships of Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov who is under house arrest in the Metropol hotel right across from the Kremlin. Insightful, witty story telling.

Black Water Rising and Bluebird, Bluebird by Attica Locke

Well written suspense thriller stories investigated by a black Texas Ranger.

Laura Juraska, ILS

For this year, one of my favorite novels was **Yaa Gyasi's Homegoing**, a remarkable multigenerational family saga spanning from 18th century Ghana into the 20th century in both Ghana and the United States. The chapters are written almost like short stories, each focusing on another individual representing a generation of one or the other of two branches of the same family tree. I also recommend **Celeste Ng's Little Fires Everywhere** and **Viet Thanh Nguyen's The Sympathizer**.

Emily Kane, Sociology

The Heart's Invisible Furies by John Boyne

This book. Heartbreaking from page one, yet witty and utterly masterful

writing. 580 pages but it ended too soon. This book moved me to the core and when I wasn't reading it, I was counting the minutes until I next picked it up. It starts in Ireland in the 1940s and spans to today, through the eyes of an ordinary man and revolving around a family saga that is unlike any I've read. I don't even know how to truly describe what this book is about without giving too much away or not telling enough. Suffice to say, it'll be awhile until I read something as beautiful, clever, and unflinchingly poignant as the story of Cyril Avery.

The Great Alone by Kristin Hannah

This book left me breathless with each page turn. The sheer cold, dark isolation of Alaska's craggy landscape is felt in every paragraph. When I had about 50 pages left, I couldn't decide if I wanted to race to the finish or savor the story. The story is about a POW from the Vietnam War, plagued with PTSD and paranoia, moves his family to Alaska to homestead and live a life free of government and societal norms. There are so many themes to this gorgeous novel, but one profoundly obvious one, which is really felt in the last third of the book, is that what makes a family isn't necessarily bloodlines and DNA. Also, everyone has a past and everyone has a story.

A Little Life by Hanya Yanagihara

This book takes effort. It's 720 pages and is some of the most content-difficult reading I've ever done (brutal abuse, addiction, and pure raw uninhibited emotion). I had this book on my to-reads list for a while, but was validated in wanting to read it sooner than later when Tom McGuinness recommended it in last year's Good Reads edition. It follows four male college classmates as they make their way into a post-college world, sustained by ambition and their friendships with each other, while navigating the uncertainty of middle age and coming to terms with the past. It spans decades of up and downs, becoming darker

as truths and horrors are revealed. What makes this book so worth reading is the incredible writing, the way the author touches so brilliantly on themes of race, religion, addiction, abuse, and suffering. This is not a light read, but well worth the journey.

The Wife Between Us by Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen

This was a dark and twisty delight! I didn't try to figure it all out, I just waited for the reveals. It didn't disappoint.

Pachinko, by Min Jin Lee

Deeply engrossing, this novel spans several generations of a Korean family living in Japan at a time when prejudicial tendencies reigned supreme. This was historical fiction at its finest and a compelling, sweeping family saga that gave me an insight to a part of history that I didn't know much about.

A Gentleman in Moscow and Rules of Civility by Amor Towles

The first is about an exiled Russian count who is a charming, witty character in which Towles uses enchanting language to describe the surroundings, the meals, and every happenstance meeting with those the Count comes in contact with at a famed Russian hotel. The second is NYC in all its glittery glitzy splendor of the 1930s, with its upper crust societies and colorful characters.

Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine by Gail Honeyman

Eleanor struggles with the basics of appropriate social skills and tends to have no filtered thoughts. Her perfectly structured life is disrupted when she finds herself the other half of a duo saving an elderly man from collapsing outside of her office. What transpires is a deep understanding of why Eleanor isn't completely fine, and yet why this girl has the grit and tenacity to survive a frightful and traumatic upbringing. It's witty and poignant and you're pretty much just rooting for Eleanor from the

start.

Alison Keegan, Dean of the Faculty's office

Ready Player One by Ernest Cline

Amazing, can't put down -- especially if you were a nerd in the 80s

Lilac Girls by Martha Hall Kelly

Stephanie Kelley-Romano, Rhetoric

Born a Crime by Trevor Noah

Noah's retelling of his childhood in South Africa becomes a retelling of not only his life, but his mother's (and his relationship with her), as well as their experiences under apartheid. The book is peppered with sharp recollections of poverty, told with humor and a realist view of its legacy.

The Hunger by Alma Katsu

A supernatural reimagining of the Donner Party's fateful journey. As group members fall, one by one, the remaining party members are plagued by the feeling that they are being stalked by something more than just winter and hunger.

Grace Kendall, Communications

I just finished a novel that I found quite compelling. **Lilli de Jong by Janet Benton**

Suzan Kinslow, Facility Services

I looked through the previous years' lists and was shocked to see that **A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles** hadn't been mentioned yet. It's not a high action book, and sometimes feels a little slow (if you can make it to page 100, you'll be hooked), but the weaving of the characters and the story are its strengths. I won't bother describing the plot because I think if someone had described it to me I might not have bothered. It's got lots of layers though.

Two books I've read this year that use humor to help folks understand perhaps-unexamined issues of race are **Trevor Noah's Born A Crime** and **Phoebe Robinson's, No You Can't Touch My Hair: And Other Things I Still Have to Explain**

Su Langdon, Psychology

The Emigrants by W.G. Sebald

At first *The Emigrants* appears simply to document the lives of four Jewish émigrés in the twentieth century. But gradually, as Sebald's precise, almost dreamlike prose begins to draw their stories, the four narrations merge into one overwhelming evocation of exile and loss. I cannot recommend this...or any of his novels, highly enough.

Bill Low, Museum of Art

The Wolf Border by Sarah Hall

A zoologist specializing in wolf recovery is hired by a wealthy Earl to introduce wolves to his estate in northern England. The experiment is accompanied by complicated personal relationships and devious plots against the venture, ending in a surprising outcome involving a Scotland that has successfully seceded from the United Kingdom.

The Dry by Jane Harper

A Federal Agent returns to his home town in a remote Australian town to attend the funeral of his best friend, and though he has sworn to have nothing to do with the town or its people again it doesn't take him long to be pulled into the chaos. The apparent murder-suicide of his best childhood friend and his family is not as straightforward as it appears. Over all the drama looms the influence of the worst drought in a century, intense heat making tempers short and conditions dangerous.

Judy Marden, Class of 1966, retired colleague

Artemis, the newly released novel by **Andy Weir**, author of **The Martian**. The story follows the capers of a young woman, Jasaman "Jazz," struggling to make a living in the futuristic moon colony of Artemis. It was a fun read. I could envision this one being made into a movie.)

Before We Were Yours by Lisa Wingate

A fascinating novel based on historical documentation of "not-so-honest" child-adoption programs during the early 1900's. The author creates a wonderful tapestry of current and previous experiences of the main characters that kept me engrossed in the story while traveling to and from New Zealand earlier this year.

Other books I have read this past year and recommend include books that have been suggested in previous editions of the Summer Reads:

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood (I plan to read more of her books: **Hag-Seed & The Heart Goes Last**)

The Shack by William Paul Young

Monica McCusker, College Store

My favorite book this year was easily **The Heart's Invisible Furies by John Boyne**. A coming-of-age story of a gay man in Ireland, this novel was hilarious, touching, and memorable. I give a hat tip to Ali Keegan, who recommended it.

Tom McGuinness, Institutional Research, Analysis, and Planning

Excellent Women by Barbara Pym

Jane Austen-y, but in post-war London.

Ants Among Elephants by Sujatha Gidla

A family memoir about untouchables in India.

Christine Murray, ILS

A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson

This book will make you laugh out loud and will also provide a sobering look at how the U.S. "wilderness" has changed through history. Provides hilarious perspective on North American relationships with nature.

Stephanie Navrat, Advancement

Speak No Evil by Uzodinma Iweala

This incredible novel is a mixture of genres: gay coming out story, immigrant narrative, and coming of age as a male Nigerian American and a female white American. It was so riveting that I'm looking forward to reading it again.

The Last Black Unicorn by Tiffany Haddish

I loved her in *Girl Trip*, so I immediately decided to read her memoir. Ok, I confess, I listened to it on Audible because she was narrating it. I have to say it was a hoot-and-a-half. Haddish is a natural raconteur and I was constantly laughing out loud. I'm going to give this one another listen. Haddish is all that!

Then and Now: A Memoir by Barbara Cook

I have loved Cook ever since I heard her on as Marian, the librarian on the original cast recording of *The Music Man*. What a beautiful voice she had! I'm looking forward to learning about her life and learning more about the Golden Age of the Broadway musical.

The Battle of Versailles: The Night American Fashion Stumbled into the Spotlight and Made History by Robin Givhan

This sounds like my perfect summer read: Paris in the 1970s, glamorous models, Josephine Baker, and Liza Minnelli. Who could ask for more?

Boy With Thorn by Rickey Laurentiis

I have read a couple of his poems, and now I'm going for his award winning collection.

Counternarratives by John Keene

I've heard nothing but superlatives from my friends about Keene's second book, this one a collection of short stories and novellas. It recently won an American Book Award.

Charles Nero, Rhetoric

Golden Hill: A Novel of Old New York by Francis Spufford

This was by far my favorite book this year. Set in 1746 in the then-puny town of New York City, it's written in the episodic style of 18th-century novels. New York is full of high-class old Dutch money, British climbers, scoundrels, soldiers, hooligans, gay men, café-sitters, actors, duelers, slaves, and with women figuring out their role in this new world order (hint: it's limited). The protagonist is just off the boat from London (a 6-week voyage), and he's in New York on a mission that is not revealed until the end. The book tracks his adventures and misadventures while revealing life on a frontier of the Empire just as frustration with King George is gaining steam. What are the social norms in a new place? How is New York similar to and different from London? When you are secretive yourself, whom do you trust?

A Spy among Friends: Kim Philby and the Great Betrayal by Ben Macintyre

Speaking of whom one should trust, not this guy! A pedigreed English public-schooler groomed for the spy world of MI6 was a Communist early on in his career and for decades managed to spy for the Soviets,

unbeknownst to his wife, school friends, and spying colleagues. His social trappings, affable humor, and fun boozy parties shielded him from discovery, and great cost to the agents he outed. What a liar! And people kept trusting him. An interesting view into several decades of Cold war history.

Manhattan Beach by Jennifer Egan

This novel follows a woman at work – as a diver in the Brooklyn Naval Ship Yards. Concurrently, we're privy to the life of her father, who had ditched her family early on, and one of his underworld associates. Everyone's job has its challenges, paths cross, and people make some crazy decisions. Again, some double-crossing is involved.

Kerry O'Brien, Dean of the Faculty's office

I read **Lincoln in the Bardo by George Saunders** this year. Also, **The bad-ass librarians of Timbuktu: and their race to save the world's most precious manuscripts by Joshua Hammer**. A few novels I found on the featured works shelves in the library: **Smile by Roddy Doyle**, **Walter Mosley's Down the River unto the Sea** (detective novel) and **The exact nature of our wrongs by Janet Peery**. All were enjoyable, and that's all I can remember now!

Carole Parker, ILS

This past year, I marinated in mysteries, mostly. They are easy audio "reads" on my daily commute, and I find the smaller paperbacks don't bruise when I nod off while reading in bed. In addition to these, I did read a few books that are worthy of note.

Robert McCloskey: A Private Life in Words and Pictures by Jane McCloskey

This is a lovely look into the life of the father of Sal and Jane and returned me instantly to Blueberries for Sal, One Morning in Maine and

all of the other McCloskey classics that I adore.

For my annual laughter, **Bill Bryson's The Road to Little Dribbling**
Not Bryson's best effort but entertaining and who can resist that title?

Mary Oliver's Devotions

Balm for the troubled soul.

And for simple reading pleasure, these titles from the shelves of the
Orr's Island Library:

Run by Ann Patchett

Peaches for Father Francis by Joanna Harris (carrying on the
Chocolat characters)

The Horse Dancer by Jojo Moyes

Dressage, theft, grit, love, social commentary--a compelling tale.

Sarah Potter, Class of 1977, Bookstore Director Emerita

Hidden Figures: The American dream and the untold story of black women mathematicians who helped win the space race by Margot Lee Shetterly

The book that inspired the movie. Brilliant African-American women mathematicians, many of whom were hired during WW II, who helped airplane designs and continued later helping with the space program with NASA. One of them, Katherine Johnson, had a 35-year career there, was honored by President Obama, and has a building named for her. She is 99-years old.

Astrophysics for people in a hurry by Neil deGrasse Tyson

An easy read with a variety of topics about the universe. It's been on the NY Times best seller list for almost a year now.

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot

A decades long telling of one woman's story, and her family, who died of cancer in 1951. Some of her cells were removed before she died and

unusually started to reproduce. They have been used to develop polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and so on. Personal stories, scientific discoveries, and a discussion of the changes in medical ethics.

The American spirit: Who we are and what we stand for by David McCullough

A book to lift your spirits about the United States during these times. A collection of his speeches at dedications and commencements from 1989 to 2016.

The Glass Universe: How the ladies of the Harvard observatory took the measure of the stars by Dava Sobel

At the end of the 1800s, as cameras on telescopes began to have glass plates, it made it easier to examine stars on the pictures. It was tedious, but the group of women tabulated thousands of stars including ones that periodically changed brightness. Into the early 1900s they catalogued an immense number of stars. Many of the women are still recognized for their discoveries. Sobel is an excellent science writer, earlier with the NY Times, but now with several books.

Jack Pribram, Faculty Emeritus, Physics

Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility, edited by Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton

The editors write: "We are living in a time of trans visibility. Yet we are also living in a time of anti-trans violence" (page xv): The essays in this volume brilliantly address this sparkly and grim situation.

Erica Rand, Gender and Sexuality Studies

Quiet by Susan Cain

This book is about introverts and their contribution to our society.

Dark Money by Jane Mayer

The corrosive effect of big money on politics.

American Jezebel by Eve LaPlante

The life and times of Ann Hutchinson, a woman who dared challenge the Puritan hierarchy.

John Rasmussen, Facility Services

Brain Food: The Surprising Science of Eating for Cognitive Power by Lisa Mosconi

Research-informed arguments about the importance of nutrition to brain health and the prevention of cognitive decline. Includes recipes!

News of the World by Paulette Jiles

I've never been a fan of Westerns, but I couldn't put this novel down.

Salt to the Sea by Ruta Sepetys

My favorite of the year. World War II historical fiction.

Darby Ray, Harvard Center for Community Partnerships

Some years the call for good reads leaves me despondent that I didn't read MORE. But then I remind myself that I read for a living, so there's that. But should I be reading more because my last name is Read? Probably. Shameful, really... So here are some reads from in and out of class:

Against all dissuasion I read **Lincoln at the Bardo by Charles Saunders** and sort of liked it. Somewhat inscrutable style with a story that evokes the grief of Abraham Lincoln over his young son's death. For the naysayers, yes, it was a bit precious; for the enthusiasts, it was at times heartbreaking about impossible grief.

For class, my FYS read **Amy Dickinson's Strangers Tend to Tell Me Things**, a memoir of dying parents, blending families, parenting

missteps and depression. Sound fun?! Amy is my oldest friend of all time and my students either loved it or did a good job of pretending. You should too. I will recommend another book from that course until I breathe no more: **Claire Messud's The Last Life**. Family drama linked to France's colonial past. If you didn't read **Bryan Stephenson's Just Mercy** (this year's common read), read it quickly before he comes to speak at graduation. My students universally loved this amazing book on justice for death row inmates. Students in French and Francophone Studies quote **Fatima Mernissi's Dreams of Trespass** more than any other work in their capstone portfolios. Find out why. It is a memoir of growing up in a girlhood harem in Fez in the 40s-50s.

You should reconnect with your French from high school and college, too, right? Our store has a lot of great titles to help you along. Among my favorites (well received by students) **Brahim Metiba's** two short memoirs about parental connection and disconnection: **Je n'ai pas eu le temps de bavarder avec toi** (I didn't have time to chat with you) and **Ma mère et moi** (My mother and I). He weaves issues of religious and gay identity together with family expectations with great tenderness; **Mouloud Feraoun's Le fils du pauvre** (The poor man's son), a lovely recounting of youth in rural Algeria; **Leila Sebbar's** edited collection **Une enfance algérienne** (An Algerian childhood) which gives many perspectives usually from a child's perspective (and thus more easily understandable French?) on growing up in Algeria. There are a number of other titles as well, from murder mysteries with historical excitement **Didier Daeninckx's Meurtres pour mémoire** to **Flaubert's Coeur Simple**. And I'm sure you've read the literature that thinking, speaking and communicating in languages that are new to you helps fend off senility. Get one of these by your bed before you forget!

Also recommended, not from a class I gave, but a "class" I "took" (thank you Professor Tim Dugan!) would be **Tony Kushner's Angels in America**. Playing Roy Cohn in the Bates production taught me many, many lessons, one of them being what amazing writing this is.

Answering the question "What is this play about" is a perennial conundrum because there are a hundred good answers, but to start with: the 80s, AIDS, Reagan era politics, hope, despair, beauty, compassion, humor in adversity, grief... It is amazing how timely this play has become. Roy Cohn and Michael Cohen are linked by much, much more than their similar names... Trump engaged both. Read why and how!

There are several books associated with the 25th anniversary of the play, namely, **And The World Only Spins Forward by Isaac Butler and Dan Kois** which makes a great companion piece.

Kirk Read, French and Francophone Studies

One Goal by Amy Bass

A must read for anyone with ties to The Lew.

Kelsy Ross, Athletics

I want to recommend **The Broken Earth** trilogy by **N.K. Jemisin** for a feminist, POC centered, fantasy series (just finished it, it's amazing).

Also **Weapons of Math Destruction by Cathy O'Neil**, for a sobering look at how data is used in our society, and specifically for faculty **The Slow Professor by Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeger**.

Adriana Salerno, Mathematics

Born on Third Base by Chuck Collins

This isn't about sports, it's about accumulated wealth: "A One Percenter Makes the Case for Tackling Inequality, Bringing Wealth Home, and Committing to the Common Good".

Beyond the Messy Truth: How We Came Apart, How We Come Together by Van Jones

An interesting take on the current state of the Democratic and Republican parties, with each having "elite" and "popular" subsets.

When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele

A story of growing up in LA, surviving, and becoming a pivotal force in creating Black Lives Matter.

Sharon Saunders, ILS

Graphic Novels / Comics

Nimona by Noelle Stevenson

Saga by Brian Vaughan & Fiona Staples

Daytripper by Fabio Moon

Ms. Marvel by G. Willow Wilson & Adrian Alphona

Alias by Brian Michael Bendis

Non-Fiction

Jackson, 1964 by Calvin Trillin

Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America by Michael Eric Dyson

Bad Feminist by Roxane Gay

Fiction

Run by Blake Crouch

Promise of Blood by Brian McClellan

Ready Player One by Ernest Cline

Carl Steidel, Student Affairs office

American Constitutional History: A Brief Introduction by Jack Frugman, is his concise account of the growth of the Constitution through five distinct developmental stages.

In *The Soul of the First Amendment* by Floyd Adams calls the First Amendment the 'rock star of the Constitution' and claims that the protections therein make us unique from all other nations.

In *The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge* by Abraham Flexner states that that broad theoretical knowledge, often said to be "impractical," has been the basis for critical technological advances which would prove time-limited without the theoretical background.

In *The Death of Expertise* by Tom Nichols claims that modern American society has lost faith in expert knowledge, substituting for it a flattening of discourse in which all claims of truth must have equal weight. Contemporary American society feeds on agreement. Disagreement is a threat.

The following are books about books:

***Word by Word* by Kory Stamper**

***The Bookman's Tale* by Charles Lovett**

***The Yellow Lighted Bookshop* by Louis Buzbee**

***Footnotes from the World's Greatest Bookstores* by Bob Eckstein**

***The Book Thieves* by Angers Rydell**

I especially recommend the last. As the Nazis swept through Europe, and the trains left for Auschwitz, the conquerors sought, not only to eliminate the Jews, but their history and culture as well. So they destroyed their temples and their libraries and burned their books – thousands upon thousands. This is an account of that savagery.

Finally, I recommend:

***Earthly Remains and The Temptation of Forgiveness* by Donna Leon**

***Fludd* by Hilary Mantel**

The Lost Book of the Grail by Charlie Lovett

Harry Potter: A History of Magic, The British Library

Arthur and Sherlock by Michael Sims

and a fine history of Maine, **The Lobster Coast by Colin Woodward**

Sawyer Sylvester, Professor Emeritus, Sociology

My favorite book of the year was **Golden Hill by Francis Spufford**. It's a novel about New York City in 1747, i.e. 30 years before the American Revolution. It's comic, sharp, a wonderfully detailed history of old New York with its 6000 citizens, and as if that's not enough there's a serious mystery at the heart of it. One of the few authors I've read who brings the language and atmosphere of a historical past alive without seeming artificially fabricated.

I also loved **Ali Smith's** two short novels (the first two of what she is calling a Seasonal Quartet), **Autumn** and **Winter**. Smith has set herself the goal of writing these books so rapidly that they capture the sense of what is happening right now in the UK, so they touch on Brexit, Trump, climate change, technology, and immigration, among other issues. Some passages are laugh out loud funny and others are deeply serious as when a character reads with dismay a newspaper account about a crowdfunding effort to raise money to buy a boat that will repel Italian boats trying to rescue refugees. I couldn't believe that this really happened, but I looked it up and it did.

Anne Thompson, Professor Emerita, English

Winter's Bone by Daniel Woodrell

I loved it. It felt very stark and real. Brief moments of joy and longer moments of dark anxiety. Satisfying ending.

Nadia Thompson, Advancement

Kindred by Octavia Butler

A must read; if you have already read it, but it was not within the last year, then read it again. Content warnings: Racialized slavery and all that goes with it.

Love Medicine by Louise Erdrich

I hesitate to put this book on a list that is ostensibly directed at new graduates, since my own attempts to read it when I was at or near college age foundered. I suspect that to appreciate it, one needs to have some experience with mature love that persists despite failures.

The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist by Emile Habiby

Palestinian science fiction, which manages haphazardly to make a comic hero out of an informer.

The Iliad by Homer (specifically, the translation by Edward McCrorie)

The first such translation into English that, to my ear, retains the furious rhythms of the original, ancient Greek.

Gate of the Sun by Elias Khoury

Like Habiby, a novel of Palestinian experience, but epic where Habiby is comic (though still, often, grimly humorous).

The World Goes On by László Krasznahorkai

A warning: I am the sort of person who has read and enjoyed Samuel Beckett's novels, which are usually considered some of his most difficult and prickly texts. If you also appreciate them, then Krasznahorkai has written a Beckett novel for the epoch of near-instant telecommunication.

Autumn by Ali Smith

A novel of intergenerational friendship and the breaching of taboos past and present. Like many of Ali Smith's novels, it demonstrates the gaps

and tears that open up when personal lives are knitted into the fabric of history.

Swing Time by Zadie Smith

A story of race, class, gender, and the seemingly small differences that can result in vastly different life trajectories, then turns into a sharp critique of the White Savior Industrial Complex. I suspect some aspects of the narrative will resonate most vigorously for those born in the 1970s.

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead

This list ends much as it began, with a brilliant and brutal evocation of the truth that "the past does not pass, it accumulates." Content warning: Racialized slavery and all that goes with it...

Joseph Tomaras, Dean of the Faculty's office

Strangers in Their Own Land by Arlie Hochschild

Everybody Lies by Seth Stephens-Davidowitz

Buck by MK Asante

Behave by Robert Sapolsky

Becoming Wise by Krista Tippett

These five books changed me in significant ways.

William Wallace, First-Year Seminar Program

Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America by Ibram Kendi

Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism by Safiya Umoja Noble

The Underground Railroad: A Novel by Colson Whitehead

Golden Hill: A Novel of Old New York by Francis Spufford

Reckless Daughter: A Portrait of Joni Mitchell by David Yaffe

Andrew White, ILS

Since my brother's stroke-induced dementia, I have read quite a bit about the brain. I found much of interest in two recent reads.

The Brain's Way of Healing by Norman Doidge focuses on neuroplasticity and how to enhance the brain's ability to create new pathways when old ones stop working.

Into the Gray Zone by Adrian Owen studies developments in communication with people who are completely locked in and used to be diagnosed as in in vegetative states.

For those with an interest in wine or mid-20th century New York I suggest **Anne Fadiman's The Wine Lover's Daughter**. It is a witty family memoir and a paean to her dad, Clifton Fadiman.

About white people's relationship to race, I found the next two to be very thought provoking.

Debbie Irving's Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race is a memoir of discovering and manual for fighting white privilege.

Picking Cotton by Jennifer Thompson-Cannino, Ronald Cotton, and Erin Torneo. The latter is a gripping story about truth, in the form of a rape victim who identified the wrong perpetrator and after his much later exoneration becomes friends with him.

Amy Ellis Nutt's Becoming Nicole tells the eye opening story of a Maine family whose son knew from age two that he was really a girl.

Fiction

Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles is a delightful and witty narrative of the life of a fallen Russian aristocrat who experiences a rich

and slightly improbable life while under decades of house arrest in the Metropal Hotel.

The Samurai's Garden by Gail Tsukiyama tells of a young Chinese man finding maturity while convalescing in Japan long ago. This came out of the Kempers' Little Free Library on Pettingill Street!

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead, concatenates many horrors experienced by slaves and freed slaves into one amazing story that resonates today.

In the mystery, thriller, adventure categories, I had the most fun with these four:

The Red Sparrow by Jason Matthews features cold war spies, their training and their intrigues.

Vector by Robin Cook was written in 1999 and is amazingly prescient about bio-terrorists and the alt right.

Hostage by Kristina Ohlsson has a policeman suffering when his son is the hostage

The Girl Who Takes an Eye for an Eye by David Lagercrantz is hard to put down and thankfully not nearly so violent as the other Lisbeth Salander books.

Anne Williams, Professor Emerita, Economics

"No two persons ever read the same book." ~Edmund Wilson

Titles with two or more recommendations:

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead

Golden Hill: A Novel of New York by Francis Spufford

Ready Player One by Ernest Cline

A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles
Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson
When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi
The Heart's Invisible Furies by John Boyne
Artemis by Andy Weir
Kindred by Octavia Butler
Born a Crime by Trevor Noah
The Wife Between Us by Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen
The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
Lincoln in the Bardo by George Saunders
Autumn by Ali Smith
The Inspector Gamache series by Louise Penny