# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Gods</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Psycho</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America’s War for the Greater Middle East</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Themes</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Karenina</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Art of Racing in the Rain</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atonement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Best of Poe</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast of Champions</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat’s Cradle</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crossing: My Journey to the Shattered Heart of Syria</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark Sun</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy Must Die</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven Hours</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endurance: Shackleton’s Incredible Voyage</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galileo’s Daughter</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Game of Thrones</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gene: An Intimate History</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanni’s Room</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grapes of Wrath</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A History of the World in 6 Glasses</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howl’s Moving Castle</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Cargo: A Journey Among Refugees</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Ching, or Book of Changes</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence in Arabia</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lean In</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makers and Takers: The Rise of Finance and the Fall of American Business</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Man in the High Castle</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Dalloway</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No et moi</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Normal Heart</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian Wood</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Wine, Broken Bottle: Ari Shavit’s Promised Land</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Move</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmaphobia: How the Conflict of Interest Myth Undermines American Medical Innovation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray the Gay Away: The Extraordinary Lives of Bible Belt Gays</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Price of Salt</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Psychopath Test</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Room of One’s Own</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shadow of the Wind</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence: Lectures and Writings</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of a Witch</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Tooth</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sympathizer</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulysses</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Should All Be Feminists</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Featured Groups

- Monday Groups
- Tuesday Groups
- Wednesday Groups
- Thursday Groups
- Friday Groups

To sign up for a group, visit https://goo.gl/E3A2b1 or scan the QR code.

All books will be distributed at the first meeting during the second week of classes.

---

This publication, printed by University Printing Services, is issued by the University of Oklahoma Honors College. 250 copies have been prepared and distributed at no cost to the taxpayers of the State of Oklahoma. The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution. www.ou.edu/eoo

**CONTACT US**

**Email:** honorsreading@ou.edu  
**Office:** (405) 325-5291  
**Address:** 1300 Asp. Ave, Norman, OK 73019-6061  
**Website:** ou.edu/honors
About the Program

Each semester, the Honors College sponsors the Reading Groups program. The groups, composed of ten to fifteen participants and a moderator from Honors College faculty, staff, or student body, meet one hour per week to discuss about fifty pages of reading from specific books. The books cover a wide range of topics, and most have been recommended by Honors College students. This is a great chance to meet other people at the University of Oklahoma with similar interests.

Students must make a good-faith effort to complete the reading and attend the group meetings as often as possible, with the understanding that there could be one or two weeks when a student may have other obligations. With the Informal Reading Groups program, our aim is to maximize information and enjoyment, with zero stress.

As one of the most popular, rewarding, and innovative programs offered by the Honors College, the Informal Reading Groups program has its origins in the political science department, where over a decade ago, students and faculty began to meet to discuss a single book over the course of a semester. Beginning in 2009, the groups were organized and expanded by the Honors College and were open to all Honors College students. Generous donations from supporters of the Honors College have allowed the program to grow to forty groups during the fall 2015 semester. Starting in 2016, for the first time, the program includes the entire OU family, not just Honors College students.

This semester’s reading group selections include classics of literature (Anna Karenina, The Grapes of Wrath), serious books on current events (America’s War for the Greater Middle East, The Crossing), biographies (On the Move, Edgar Allen Poe), collection of essays (Silence: Lectures and Writings), and much more.

In order to expand the program further and facilitate reading group discussions beyond the meeting times, efforts are being made to give the program an online presence. The sign-up process has been automated using the Qualtrics tool at survey.ou.edu, making it easier for both moderators and participants to recommend books and sign up for a group. We have also begun working with the Center for Teaching Excellence to integrate the OU Create platform into the reading group experience. Moderators can post reading schedules, share photos, and publish blog posts with thoughts and criticism. The reading group website also can function as a “digital commons,” where the discussions over books and other relevant topics continue even after the group meetings end. An online presence for the reading group means that even people who cannot attend group meetings can participate in the discussion.

Staff and Moderators

Dean
David Ray

Associate Dean
Rich Hamerla

Editors
Will O’Donnell
Dylan Juby

Layout
Dylan Juby

Printing
University Printing Services

Photography
Lisa Tucker
Shevaun Williams

Moderators
Emmanuel Adonteng
Amanda Ahadizadeh
Stephanie Alfred
Jeremy Allen
Ben Alpers
Alice Barrett
Robert Bellafiore
Seth Bryant
Jared Bond
Kaylee Buckley
Alex Buttram
Matthew Carman
Jeremy Cleveland
Mitchell Clough
Jesse Coker
Adrienne Coyle
Jordan Crawford
Claire Crofford
Marie Daliam
Julia Ehrhardt
Megan Gage
Jaci Gandenberger
Will Goree
Rich Hamerla
Hannah Harrell
Sarah Helsley
Lindsay Jones
Dylan Juby
Maaz Khan
Lauren Lason
Patrick Lockwood
Tuong-Phi Le
Jake Mazeitis
Darren Midkiff
Tanya Miller-Eager
Elena Montes
Sam Moore
Kelsey Morris
Allie Naifeh
Andrea Nguyen
Will O’Donnell
Greg Olson
T. Patrick Ortez
Andrea Prichard
Rahul Rajala
James Ratcliff
David Ray
Colin Riggert
Evan Schleicher
Geneviere Schmitt
Zach Simpson
Frankie Spring
Linda Stack-Nelson
Auston Stiefer
Alex Stubblefield
Sarah Tracy
Lisa Tucker
Clare Vogt
Ula Wildfield
Landon Wright
Christina Wu
Aidan Young
I remember anticipating the reading group featuring *Other Colors* and commenting to a friend that I did not expect to enjoy myself. This was because of nothing more than the fact that I had “no interest in Turkey and no interest in literature.”

I soon found that I was completely in the wrong. As I engaged in the book as well as dialogue with a professor and with other students, especially the ones who had visited Turkey, I found myself thrilled and excited to learn more about Orhan Pamuk, Istanbul, the Ottoman Empire, and Turkey.

And then I understood what might be the most important lesson I’ve ever received: *I am* interested in both Turkey and literature. This is something that I would have never anticipated for I have no personal connection or natural interest in either.

The implications of this discovery were astounding, for my lack of interest in Turkey was actually a presumed lack of interest, and it only took one book to prove otherwise.

But if this was true of Turkey and literature, what wouldn’t I find fascinating if I took the time to study? Suddenly, everything in the world was interesting. I was overwhelmed, but in a very positive way.

When I started the Informal Reading Groups this semester, I had to be very disciplined to finish the fifty pages required for both books each week.

Since my epiphany, if it can so be called, I have required myself to read fifty pages of any book every day. At first, this seemed like a chore, for my days were full already with school and clubs. But I pushed myself, and every day it seems less and less like a chore. I’m feeling now the daily desire to read, the feeling that I want to read, something I have never felt before.

You’ll be amazed to hear that I wake up about ninety minutes earlier now just so I can start the day right - with a book. By the time you read this I will have finished three books in as many weeks - all fiction classics.

I want to emphasize that the books we read and the discussions we had among the students were great... and I left feeling energized about reading. My definition of education has drastically morphed, and I now challenge myself to pursue lifelong learning.

—— Jordan Rogers

Jordan Rogers

engineering major and Honors College alumnus
Informal Reading Groups Fall 2016

Free for All OU Students
No fees or tuition, just free books provided by the University of Oklahoma Honors College

No Grades
The only commitment you make is a good-faith effort to complete the reading and attend group meetings as often as possible

Community
The Informal Reading Groups are a great opportunity to get to know your fellow classmates and discuss topics of mutual interest
The Gene
by Siddhartha Mukherjee

In 2010, Siddhartha Mukherjee was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his book The Emperor of All Maladies, a “biography” of cancer. Here, he follows up with a biography of the gene—and The Gene is just as informative, wise, and well-written as that first book. Mukherjee opens with a survey of how the gene first came to be conceptualized and understood, taking us through the thoughts of Aristotle, Darwin, Mendel, Thomas Morgan, Francis Collins, and others. One reviewer notes “this is perhaps the greatest detective story ever told—a millennia-long search, led by a thousand explorers, for the question marks at the center of every living cell.” Mukherjee clearly and skillfully illustrates how the science has grown so much more advanced and complicated since the eugenics laws and scandals of the 1920s. We are developing the capacity to directly manipulate the human genome, and the ethical questions have also grown much more complicated. Mukherjee beautifully navigates a sea of complicated medical information in a way that is digestible, poignant, and engaging. Scientific understanding of the human genome, and our potential to manipulate it, will clearly be one of the most important of all scientific revolutions, and one that is destined to have a fundamental impact on the lives of generations to come. This book is an important guide to that future.

America’s War for the Greater Middle East by Andrew Bacevich

From the end of World War II until 1980, virtually no American soldiers were killed in action while serving in the Greater Middle East. Since 1990, virtually no American soldiers have been killed in action anywhere else. What caused this shift? Andrew J. Bacevich, military historian and Vietnam combat veteran, offers an incisive critical history of this ongoing military enterprise—now more than thirty years old and with no end in sight. Connecting the dots in a way no other historian has done before, Bacevich weaves a compelling narrative out of episodes as varied as the 1980 failure to rescue the American hostages in our Tehran embassy, the Beirut bombing of 1983, the Mogadishu firefight of 1993, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the rise of ISIS in the present decade. Reviewing this book, The New York Times said “Bacevich is thought-provoking, profane and fearless. . . . [His] call for Americans to rethink their nation’s militarized approach to the Middle East is incisive, urgent and essential.” One of the grim and eerie wonders of this monumental new book is the way in which just about every wrongheaded thing Washington did in that region in the fourteen-plus years since 9/11 had its surprising precursor in the two decades of American war there before the World Trade Center towers came down.
The Crossing by Samar Yazbek

Human Cargo by Caroline Moorehead

This group will read two books, one by Samar Yazbek and the other by Caroline Moorehead, both with crucial themes of today’s events involving exile and immigration.

Yazbek’s provides her own gripping account of how, as a critical journalist of Assad’s regime, she was forced into exile from Syria. Watching her home turn into a place of turmoil and bloodshed, she returns to take action, helping in any way possible to aid her own people as an exile. Within her story unfolds stories of bravery, brutality, and precious humanity from even the most difficult of times. The Observer calls the book “one of the first political classics of the 21st century.”

Moorehead’s incredible description of refugees all over the world based on her own work is a National Book Critics Award Finalist for good reason. The book explains why people are forced from their homes, puts a human face on the news, and paints unforgettable portraits of refugees from Cairo to Finland. The book reveals how important the topic of “refuge” is alongside other global issues. The Daily Telegraph boldly states that the author “knows how to grip the reader’s attention and haunt their dreams... [She] is unafraid to look into the darkest corners of the world and make us want to look too.”

---

Pharmaphobia by Thomas P. Stossel

For millennia, human survival depended on our innate abilities to fight pathogens and repair injuries. Only recently has medical science prolonged longevity and improved quality of life. Physicians and academic researchers contribute to such progress, but the principal contributor is private industry that produces the drugs and medical devices enabling doctors to prevent and cure disease. Heavy regulation and biology’s complexity and unpredictability make medical innovation extremely difficult and expensive.

Pharmaphobia describes how an ideological crusade, stretching over the last quarter century, has used distortion and flawed logic to make medical innovation even harder in a misguided pursuit of theoretical professional purity. Bureaucrats, reporters, politicians, and lawyers have built careers attacking the medical products industry, belittling its contributions to innovation and accusing it of malfeasance: overselling product value, flaunting safety, and corrupting physicians and academics who partner with it. The mania has imposed conflict-of-interest regulations limiting or banning valuable interactions between industry and physicians and researchers and diverting scarce resources from innovation to compliance. The victims are patients suffering from cancer, dementia, and other serious diseases for which new treatments are delayed, reduced, or eliminated as a result of these pointless regulations.

With breathtaking detail, Harvard Medical School professor Dr. Thomas Stossel shows how this attack on doctors limits innovation and inhibits the process of bringing new products into medical care.
Meeting Time  Location
M 4:00-4:50   CCD1 217
for 8 weeks

**Moderator(s):**
Matthew Carman and Patrick Lockwood

---

**The Art of Racing in the Rain**
by Garth Stein

Garth Stein’s *The Art of Racing in the Rain* is an international bestseller, and for good reason. In the words of Sara Gruen, the author of *Water for Elephants*, *The Art of Racing in The Rain* has everything: love, tragedy, redemption, danger, and—most especially—the canine narrator Enzo. This old soul of a dog has much to teach us about being human. I loved this book.” Stein is a master writer, who weaves an intriguing and heart wrenching tale, all through the mind and experiences of a wise dog.

What does it mean to be human? This is the quest that Enzo the retriever-terrier mix embarks upon during the course of *The Art of Racing in the Rain*. Our canine friend believes that upon his death he will be reborn as a human, and he wishes to prepare himself for this next step. By opening the book during the end of his life, Enzo utilizes personal anecdotes, ruminations on humanity’s many strange quirks, and instructional chapters about car racing, especially in the rain, to elicit laughter, tears, and introspection in the reader. Enzo is not just a storyteller; he is a teacher. Through reading his words one comes to realize just how precious the human experience can be.

---

**Dark Sun**
by Richard Rhodes

Building on the first book in the series, *Making the Atomic Bomb*, Richard Rhodes’ *Dark Sun* is the second his four-volume history of nuclear weapons.

Focused largely—although not exclusively—on the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union to build and then control the international ramifications of the hydrogen bomb, this sweeping study covers the period from the Second World War through the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Rhodes explores the science, politics, culture, and diplomacy surrounding the bomb’s invention from a historical perspective, which does much to inform today’s world; with regard to geopolitics as well as nuclear issues.

It is carefully and exhaustively researched, masterfully written, and a must-read for anyone interested in the history of science and technology. (You need not have read *Making the Atomic Bomb* to participate in this group.)
The social and political challenges for people who identify within the LGBTQ umbrella can be particularly difficult in regions of the United States where conservative religion plays a major role in public life. Using this fact as her launching point, sociologist Bernadette Barton set out to examine the specific pressures faced by gay and lesbian people who live in the Bible Belt. Her book draws extensively on interviews and fieldwork to portray the fabric of peoples’ lives, including both hurts and victories. Chapters examine institutional and personal religion; experiences of being closeted and coming out; and public expressions of anti-gay sentiment, among other subjects.

This book has been praised by numerous gay and lesbian organizations and authors, including being a 2013 finalist for the Lambda Literary Awards.

**Pray the Gay Away**
by Bernadette Barton

**Meeting Time**
M 4:30-5:20
for 8 weeks

**Location**
DLBH 182

**Moderator(s):**
Dr. Marie Dallam

---

In *Lean In*, Sheryl Sandberg discusses the reasons why women continue to be under represented in leadership positions both in government and the private industry. Women have long since made up 50% of college graduates, and yet they still are not finding success at the top.

As the chief operating officer at Facebook, Sandberg uses her own stories, mistakes, and experiences to provide advice for women and men to change the narrative. This inspirational book gives women great advice on finding success in the workplace and supporting other women in doing so. It provides a call to action for both men and women to examine their views on women in the workplace and support change in their own environments. In this way, Sandberg hopes to encourage women to be ambitious, take risks, and build a healthy career, while also breaking down barriers in the workplace.

While the book focuses on the workplace environment, its ideas transfer to finding success and leadership positions in college as well. We can learn ways to improve our own professional prospects and inspire equality for women on this campus.

**Lean In**
by Sheryl Sandberg

**Meeting Time**
M 6:00-6:50
for 6 weeks

**Location**
DLBH 182

**Moderator(s):**
Kaylee Buckley
and Lauren Lason
**Endurance**
by Alfred Lansing

An epic adventure from a heroic age. *Endurance* is a miraculous story of human survival in extreme environmental conditions. Unrivalled by any dark fairytale or Hollywood's stretch of action-adventure imagination, author Alfred Lansing, transports readers to an almost life-like experience with painstaking accuracy of the 22-month long battle to survive.


Considered a master planner and tenacious leader, Shackleton and his motley crew departed for Antarctica on the eve of WW1. Six weeks in to the expedition, with 1,000 miles behind them, the *Endurance* and crew became prisoners of ice. And so, this heroic tale of leadership and man's will to live, begins. One if not the greatest legendary survival stories of all time, the *Endurance* expedition pushed man beyond his limits and forged a leader that 100 years later continues to inspire extreme adventurers and influential leaders around the world.

This book will test our understanding of how far the human mind and body can be pushed, awaken your inner explorer, and inspire us to be resolute in the most difficult of circumstances. “By endurance, we conquer.”

**Eleven Hours**
by Pamela Erens

In *Eleven Hours*, Pamela Erens tells the story of two women coming together in their most vulnerable state. Lore arrives at a maternity center to face the delivery of her first child completely alone, and endures eleven hours of labor with only Franckline, a nurse/midwife who happens to be pregnant herself, by her side.

Shifting seamlessly between perspectives of these two women, *Eleven Hours* delves into the complexities of pregnancy, motherhood, identity, and humanity. I am looking forward to exploring this intimate portrayal of childbirth and all it represents. As Karen Russell put it, “Childbirth, this uniquely female form of heroism, is rarely documented in our literature,” and I am eager to discuss the implications of sharing--and not sharing--the stories of women bringing new life into the world. Come and marvel at the most fundamental human experience and the power with which we come into the world!
The Myth of the Rational Voter by Bryan Caplan

In *The Myth of the Rational Voter*, economics professor Bryan Caplan addresses the question of why American voters consistently favor economic policies which economists disagree with. He does not contend that the primary culprits are an insidious conspiracy of special interests and lobbyists, but that in fact the problem is innate to democracy.

In this thought-provoking book, Caplan critically evaluates the theoretical frameworks through which economists have long studied democratic systems, and argues the jarring thesis that democracy encourages voters to be “rationally irrational”, avoiding critical thought and succumbing to fallacies and biases which systematically skew policy in the wrong directions. Weaving together empirical data, elementary economics, and our own intuitions about ourselves, Caplan shows that we should expect democratic actors not only to vote against their own interests, but against the interests of everyone, and that democracies would perform better if more decisions were removed from the political sphere and relocated to the market.

With the presidential election coming up, this book will be sure to challenge your preconceptions of democracy, and raise questions about whether or not it’s all it’s cracked up to be.

My Promised Land by Ari Shavit and Old Wine, Broken Bottle by Norman Finkelstein

The Israel-Palestine conflict has continued for decades, without peace in sight. At the heart of its ideological controversy is the role of Zionism. Its supporters claim it is simply the establishment and preservation of the Jewish homeland, while its critics point to its role in the creation of the Palestinian refugee crisis, the racism prevalent in Israeli society, and many of the obstacles present in the so-called peace process. Indeed, the debate over the Israeli-Palestine conflict often leads to a debate over the core ideals of Zionism itself.

This reading group will specifically discuss liberal Zionism and its critiques by reading Ari Shavit’s bestselling *My Promised Land* and Norman Finkelstein’s *Old Wine, Broken Bottle*. Shavit defines himself proudly as a liberal Zionist and Israeli patriot, who confronts uncomfortable truths about his country while also extolling its virtues. By doing so, he attempts to reconcile his liberal beliefs with what many say are contradictory Zionist beliefs. Norman Finkelstein, however, cannot help but point out these contradictions. Renowned as a scholar on the conflict, he not only challenges the morality of liberal Zionism, but also identifies the false narrative of history he believes it propagates.

This fall I hope to have a stimulating discussion on liberal Zionism, its criticisms, and its implications in the conflict.
Makers and Takers
by Rana Foroohar

Who are makers and takers?

*Makers and Takers* offers a unique view into the complexities of modern finance. CNN’s global economic analyst, Rana Foroohar, presents the argument that finance is bad for business - and finance as a whole. Traditionally, finance served the needs of business (Foroohar’s “makers”) by providing capital and investing in long-term growth. But starting in the postwar decades and ramping up from the Reagan era onward, finance (the “takers”) began to take care of No.1 first.

The novel “offers a maddening view” showcasing how the “financialization of America” is widening the gap between the rich and poor, while threatening the future of the American Dream. The problem is no longer simply good versus evil. Our economy needs finance to grow. But when there are too many takers and not enough makers, the fertilization finance gives the economy turns into more of a blight. The harvest is less bountiful, made worse by the takers taking an ever larger share from the shrinking whole.

Through colorful stories of both “Takers” and “Makers,” Foroohar reveals how we change the system for a better and more sustainable shared economic future; however, the problems in our market system go much broader and deeper than meets the eye...

As John C. Bogle states, “It’s up to us – all of us.”

Atonement
by Ian McEwan

Ian McEwan elegantly explores the impact that a person can truly have on another in his novel, *Atonement*. This novel is essentially about actions and consequences. When Briony witnesses events she doesn’t fully understand she makes decisions that haunt her, and those she wronged, for the rest of their lives.

Through multiple perspectives and multiple times we too experience the guilt, loss, and bitterness that can amount from one action. The reality of human error and fantastic nature of imagination conflict in a way that is both revealing and enjoyable.
Mondays/Tuesdays

Dorothy Must Die by Danielle Paige and Son of a Witch by Gregory Maguire

This group will read two novels set in the Land of Oz by two different authors. Each author has their own twist on L. Frank Baum’s original story, but both are set around social justice issues and revolution.

The Wicked Years continue in Gregory Maguire’s Son of a Witch. Maguire’s Oz is darker and more mature than the lighthearted world of Oz that L. Frank Baum created. The story continues after the Wizard of Oz falls from power, and the death of Elphaba. Her possible son, Liir, is set on a dark journey that will take him deep into Emerald City, abandoned by the Wizard, and into the jaws of dragons.

Danielle Paige’s Dorothy Must Die centers on high school student, Amy Gumm, who is caught up in a tornado and transported to Oz. She soon learns that Oz has been conquered by Dorothy Gale. Dorothy has become a self-proclaimed princess and dictator that feeds off of power. Amy is recruited by the Revolutionary Order of the Wicked and goes through combat training to eliminate Dorothy as well as her evil companions, Scarecrow, Lion, and the Tin Man.

Meeting Time Location
M 5:00-5:50 CCD1 201
for 15 weeks
Moderator(s):
Tanya Miller-Eager

We Should All Be Feminists by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

This group will read Chimamanda Adichie’s We Should All Be Feminists, a feminist manifesto written by one of the world’s most popular African writers. Adichie's We Should All Be Feminists has made waves, receiving acclaim around the world for its clear and unapologetic call to arms. It was even recently adopted as required reading for all sixteen-year-olds in Sweden.

The long essay draws on Adichie’s own experiences as a woman living in Nigeria and America, and on her incisive understanding of the intersections of gender and politics in Africa and the West. Through these experiences, she makes an eloquent and impassioned argument for why everyone—not just women—should be a feminist.

We will read We Should All Be Feminists along with several short, supplementary articles written by Adichie and others to interrogate her definition of feminism and the gendered politics of Africa and the West, and to better appreciate her beautiful writing. Whether you’re a die-hard, critical, or reluctant feminist, this book is for you!

Meeting Time Location
T 1:30-2:20 CCD1 217
for 4 weeks
Moderator(s):
Dr. Andreana Prichard
Tuesdays

Guns, Germs, and Steel by Jared Diamond
and
The Sympathizer by Viet Thanh Nguyen

This reading group will read and discuss two books, the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction winner: Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies by Jared M. Diamond and the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for fiction winner: The Sympathizer: A Novel by Viet Thanh Nguyen.

Guns, Germs and Steel, whose sole aim to answer the question of why West is perceived to be “best,” is a comprehensive discussion of the history of human evolution and diversity through a study of migration, socio-economic/cultural adaptation to environmental conditions, and technological diffusion.

The Sympathizer, on the other hand, is a tragicomic novel which reaches beyond its historical context to illuminate more universal themes: the eternal misconceptions and misunderstandings between East and West, and the moral dilemma faced by people forced to choose not between right and wrong, but right and right.

Although on the surface these two works of literature may appear radically different, one being historical and the other fictional, we believe they both share a common thread; Guns, Germs and Steel deals with the roots of cultural hegemony of the West, and the lens through which that hegemony forces us view both history and current events. Whereas, The Sympathizer allows us to envision a person whose heart and mind lies divided by this hegemony, and through their experience; we finally allow ourselves begin to question, how and to the amount which we allow this lens to distort reality.

Note: This book contains many traumatic events, including death and stillbirth.

If you have ever moved into a new house in another state, you know that it is a hassle. Now imagine making that journey on foot. The Grapes of Wrath, by John Steinbeck, traces the journey of Tom Joad and his family from Oklahoma to California during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Tom, recently released from prison, helps his family to make the difficult journey because they believe that they have no other choice. They think that they will be able to find better lives as fruit pickers there, whereas they would die if they tried to keep farming in the dry ground of Oklahoma.

This book is a hallmark of American literature, because it deals with many quintessential human questions. What is the American dream, and is it an illusion? Is capitalism all that we make it out to be? What is morality, and is it absolute? Is there a God that watches over us, or are we on our own to wander the earth trying to fend for ourselves? These are some of the important questions explored by Steinbeck; questions that we should all consider because the ability to ponder them is what makes us so poignantly, uniquely, and painfully human.

We will explore these questions as a group, because these questions are good to consider as a community of minds, as well as on our own time.
A Room of One’s Own and Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf

In this group, we will be reading two of Virginia Woolf’s most important works. Mrs. Dalloway is a beautifully written account of a day in London and hailed as one of the earliest instances of queer female representation as well as one of the earliest stream of consciousness narratives. We will read portions of the book out loud to make it more accessible as well as discussing what we read at home.

A Room of One’s Own is a first-person account detailing the gender discrimination Woolf experienced in educational institutions and social circles. It discusses the issues of income inequality and perceptions of “women and fiction,” as well as showing a poignant portrait of the world post-war.

Discussions will cover intersectional and theoretical critiques of Woolf as well as assessing her style and impact.

So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed by Jon Ronson

“So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed”

“Going to Africa. Hope I don’t get AIDS. Just kidding. I’m white!”

It took only this tweet to sentence Justine Sacco to a lifetime of public humiliation. A bad joke meant to mock her privilege as a white person traveling to a continent ravaged by disease had suddenly become the catalyst for everybody – humanitarian workers, misogynists, brands – to project onto her everything they thought was wrong with the world. With the internet’s latest victim suspended in the air with no Wi-Fi access, they waited in anticipation for the moment Justine’s plane would touch ground, where she could finally be exposed to the chaos this tweet had created in her absence. A hashtag brought them all together: #HasJustineLandedYet.

Anybody who has used the internet understands the power of public shaming. Some of us, otherwise powerless, may have even participated in a cause, piling on individuals and institutions until we exacted our own version of justice. Others may have been, or could one day be, its targets. Think of every bad joke you’ve ever made, every off-color conversation you’ve ever had. Now imagine that joke defines who you are during everything from first dates to grad school applications and job interviews.

Journalist Jon Ronson examines the culture of public shaming, from its early days in the town square to modern-day victims of the new mob mentality. When is internet justice virtuous? Who is held accountable? And if we risk being remembered forever for a lapse of judgment, should we have the right to be forgotten?
A Game of Thrones
by George R.R. Martin

Made famous through its eponymous television adaption, A Game of Thrones is the first novel in George R. R. Martin’s ongoing epic, A Song of Ice and Fire. Originally published over a decade before achieving mainstream fame, A Game of Thrones depicts a world on the brink of war between combatants both living and dead. While dragon eggs and the ominous Others ground the series in fantasy, Martin’s true strength lies in his realistic portrayal of a diverse cast of characters. Through sharp dialogue and substantial characterization, made possible with alternating points of view, Martin manages to weave an intricate, medieval fantasy story that feels refreshingly modern and human. A Game of Thrones rejects uninspired archetypes such as the infallible hero and irredeemable villain, opting instead for a cast of characters with complex motives that defies simplistic notions of good and evil.

Whether you’re a fantasy veteran or someone who’s previously been turned off by the genre’s reliance on clichéd tropes, A Game of Thrones promises to buck expectations with a story of intrigue, battle, romance, and wit that is difficult to rival.

Meeting Time | Location
--- | ---
T 12:00-12:50 | CCD1 101
for 13 weeks

Moderator(s):
Jared Bond and Christina Wu

American Psycho
by Bret Easton Ellis

Note: Although a significant work of literature, American Psycho features scenes of intense violence and a number of negative attitudes toward women, homosexuality, and human life in general. On account of this content, this book is not recommended for all readers.

A self-proclaimed satirist, Bret Easton Ellis emerged among other novelists in the 1980’s presenting particular challenges to modern literature. His third and most controversial novel, American Psycho is a stream-of-consciousness story told from the perspective of New York businessman, Patrick Bateman. A charming and intelligent man, Bateman is highly successful, though beneath his well-mannered exterior lurks an impulsive and deceptive serial killer.

Through Bateman’s detailing the events of both his day to day life and his violent escapades, Ellis explores the role of violence and detachment in modern society. A critique of human depravity, American Psycho pulls out all the stops as it takes its readers through the mind of one of the world’s most dangerous individuals.

Meeting Time | Location
--- | ---
T 4:30-5:20 | CCD1 217
for 10 weeks

Moderator(s):
Patrick Ortez
On the Move: A Life
by Oliver Sacks

Who is Oliver Sacks? How did he come to be the astute clinician and world famous author of so many books about the human side of medicine? On The Move: A Life introduces you to the fascinating man who authored The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat; Awakenings; Migraine; and Musicophilia.

With passion and unusual candor, Sacks takes you on his personal journey in medicine and in life--his love of fast motorcycles, his fascination with chemistry, his evolution as a neurologist hyper-involved in the lives of his patients, his drug use, his extraordinary athleticism, and his emerging homosexuality. Sacks’s nimble mind, sharp wit, and masterful storytelling abilities make this book a pleasure to read. If, as Andrew Solomon of the New York Times suggests, “the mark of a good memoir is that it makes you nostalgic for experiences you never had,” Oliver Sacks has succeeded brilliantly in On the Move.

There will be two moderators for this reading group: a student Auston Stiefer and an Honors College professor, Sarah Tracy. Auston is planning a career in medicine, while Prof. Tracy directs the Medical Humanities Program at OU.

Toward Democracy
by James Kloppenberg

A brand new book, two decades in the making, from one of America’s leading intellectual historians, Toward Democracy is a wide-ranging look at the development of modern ideas of representative government in the North Atlantic world. Though he begins by discussing foundational classical and Biblical ideas about government, Kloppenberg focuses on England, France, and America in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, with a particular interest in the way revolutions and civil wars have affected representative government.

Kloppenberg sees democracy as a moral project as much as a political one and suggests that the triumph of democratic ideas has always been and remains hard-fought and contested. Along the way, Kloppenberg offers fresh insight into key democratic theorists, such as Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville.

This much anticipated book is already receiving rave reviews. In a presidential election year in which the democratic world is experiencing a fair amount of political turmoil, it is particularly timely.
Informal Reading Groups Fall 2016

Tuesdays/Wednesdays

Anna Karenina
by Leo Tolstoy

From Amazon.com:
Considered by some to be the greatest novel ever written, Anna Karenina is Tolstoy’s classic tale of love and adultery set against the backdrop of high society in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. A rich and complex masterpiece, the novel charts the disastrous course of a love affair between Anna, a beautiful married woman, and Count Vronsky, a wealthy army officer. Tolstoy seamlessly weaves together the lives of dozens of characters, and in doing so captures a breathtaking tapestry of late-nineteenth-century Russian society. As Matthew Arnold wrote in his celebrated essay on Tolstoy, “We are not to take Anna Karenina as a work of art; we are to take it as a piece of life.”

Meeting Time Location
T 1:30-2:20 CCD1 201
for 12 weeks

Moderator(s):
Alice Barrett
and Amanda Ahadizadeh

Silence: Lectures and Writings
by John Cage

Originally published in 1961, Silence is a collection of essays and lectures written by legendary avant-garde composer John Cage between 1938 and 1961. In them, Cage does what he does best, and explores the bleeding edge of music, all the while interweaving philosophical musings derived from his fervent fascination with Zen Buddhism.

As the lines between music and philosophy are blurred, so too are the boundaries of what literature should be. Much like in his music, Cage experiments in these writings, challenging any traditional notions of form. At times, two separate texts are superimposed, with lines from one interrupting the other. Lengths of words are notated for speakers. Different texts are juxtaposed in side-by-side columns to capture the innovative nature of Cage’s lectures. In so doing, Cage creates what has become a landmark book in the world of art and music.

With the stated goal of writing not about ideas, but to produce them, Cage’s literary magnum opus is a must-read for anybody interested in creation - in ideas that challenge and look towards the future, pushing the boundaries of human understanding.

Seeing as Cage is also one of the most influential composers of the twentieth century, this group will incorporate his musical works themselves into discussion, contextualizing and enriching the ideas presented in his prose.

Meeting Time Location
W 11:30-12:20 CCD1 214
for 8 weeks

Moderator(s):
Colin Riggert
Sweet Tooth
by Ian McEwan

Amidst the suspicious and duplicitous atmosphere of 1972 Cold War Britain, the academic and civil elite fear not physical violence, but cultural violence, struggling to maintain the harsh opposition to all things communist. Serena Frome, a mathematics student at Cambridge, is recruited by her older lover and mentor to join MI5 to help combat these forces of communist sympathy. An avid reader of pulp fiction, Serena is not assigned to work pertaining to her knowledge of mathematics, but rather to Operation Sweet Tooth, an anti-communist intellectual campaign spearheaded by the British government. Serena's mark is the unusual Tom Haley, a promising young writer, whose stories Serena falls for. But as Serena begins to develop feelings for not just the work, but the man behind it, she struggles to maintain the fiction of her undercover life and her romantic relationships.

Written with his characteristically witty and excellent prose, Ian McEwan's novel explores how much the people in our life, particular those for whom we have strong sentiment, can influence our choices and even mold our very character.

Meeting Time: W 3:00-3:50
Location: CCD1 201
for 8 weeks
Moderator(s): Elena Montes and Alex Stubblefield

No et moi
by Delphine de Vigan

Note: Discussion would be in French, but by no means do you have to be fluent.

Winner of the 2008 Prix des libraires and adapted into a movie in 2010, No et moi follows a highly intelligent thirteen year old Parisian girl who spends her afternoons in the Gare d'Austerlitz, watching people come and go. When she has to do a presentation in one of her classes, she chooses to do it over homeless women in Paris and must convince a homeless girl she's seen in the train station to help her.

An engaging read, No et moi deals with heavy issues seen through the eyes of a relatable character, witty, sarcastic, too smart for her own good and trying to solve both huge social issues and more personal family crises all by herself.

More contemporary than you'll read in most French classes, No et moi is a French young adult novel that tells a story anyone from any culture could relate too, but it's also a nice slice of life of what a French teenager's school, home, and social life is like. It's a must read for anyone interested in getting a better understanding of life in France.

Meeting Time: W 5:00-5:50
Location: CCD1 214
for 9 weeks
Moderator(s): Adrienne Coyle
Informal Reading Groups Fall 2016

Middlesex
by Jeffrey Eugenides

There has never been a more important time in our history to respect and celebrate the identities of all people. Every time we turn on the news, we are bombarded with images and stories about people dying because of who they love, what their skin looks like, or what they believe in; despite America's constitutional belief in equality, it's clear that society has a long way to go before we live up to the expectations we have for it.

That is why stories are so important. They help us to relate to people that aren’t like us, to understand how people might perceive the world differently than we do. Sometimes we laugh along with the storyteller, and sometimes we cry, but we always come away with a greater appreciation of the world we live in. Enter Middlesex.

This Pulitzer-Prize winning novel by Jeffery Eugenides follows three generations of a Greek (and later Greek-American) family leading up to the birth of Calliope Stephanides, who is intersex. In order to find out why Calliope is different from other girls, she has to discover the generations of genetic history behind her and a family secret. Eugenides employs his bizarre humor and narration to the classic narrative of the life of an immigrant family, allowing it to be read from a whole new perspective. Middlesex explores sex, inheritance, and Calliope's life as a young girl who eventually becomes Cal.

The Shadow of the Wind
by Carlos Ruiz Zafón

One of my personnel favorites, The Shadow of the Wind, will satisfy all readers who cannot decide on a single genre. It contains action, suspense, romance, mystery, murder, and a great twist ending. It is a worldwide bestseller having sold over 15 million copies.

Set in 1945 Barcelona, the story follows a book loving boy, Daniel, who finds one of the last remaining copies of The Shadow of the Wind by Julian Carax. Daniel falls in love with the book from the moment he reads it. However, as he grows up he finds people seem uncannily interested in the book and later discovers that a mysterious figure has been hunting down and burning all of Carax’s books. Soon Daniel finds himself entangled in a dangerous race to uncover the secret of Julian Carax and save those connected to the books.
Informal Reading Groups Fall 2016

**Breakfast of Champions** and **Cat’s Cradle** by Kurt Vonnegut

What is ice-nine? What does a writer feel watching his/her/their creation from a quiet table in a crowded and musty bar? How do we talk about unspeakable human cruelty? What were you doing the day the bomb dropped on Hiroshima? (What were you doing on 9/11?) It is these questions that the dual reading of **Cat’s Cradle** and **Breakfast of Champions** hopes to address.

In **Cat’s Cradle**, the narrator sets out to write a book about what important people were doing the day the bomb fell on Hiroshima when he stumbles upon a strange substance called ice-nine. This discovery leads the reader on a wild and strange, purposefully unbelievable journey meant to satirize the arms race while exploring major notions of science, technology and morality.

**Breakfast of Champions** follows a little known science fiction writer and a wealthy businessman who believes that the stories of the writer are truth. This leads to a deeper exploration of American society through discussion of themes of suicide, free will, mental illness, and social and economic cruelty. The simple sentence structure and satirical nature of Vonnegut’s writing gives a new dimension to complex philosophical questions, at the same time revealing the ridiculousness of many widely held societal ideals while remaining accessible to almost any reader. Each strange word or unknown name leads the reader unsuspecting to a very real phenomena in our world, but Vonnegut disguises the truth so that it is upon you before you can realize it or ignore it. He misdirects to lead the reader in the right direction and that is truly incredible.

**Meeting Time**: W 4:00-4:50 for 13 weeks
**Location**: CCD1 201
**Moderator(s)**: Jordan Crawford and Evan Schleicher

---

**The Man in the High Castle** by Philip K. Dick

“John Cage, the composer, uses it to derive chord progressions. Several physicists use it to plot the behavior of subatomic particles. Jung used it with patients to get around their psychological blind spots. Leibnitz based his binary system on it, if not his entire philosophy of monadology. I’ve used it to develop the direction of a novel...”

This is what acclaimed SF author, functioning schizophrenic, and lumpen-prophet Philip K. Dick wrote of the Book of Changes, a 2,500-year-old Chinese divination text that is at once a collection of poems, a method for psychoanalysis, and an oracle. One of the Five Classics of Confucianism, the I Ching is composed of 64 hexagrams whose attendant images, interpretations, and philosophical commentaries are chosen at random by counting yarrow stalks or throwing coins, used for millennia by heads of state, religious leaders, businessmen, psychoanalysts, and all manners of artists for reasons as diverse as their disciplines.

In this reading group, which serves as an introduction to the text and mechanics of the I Ching, we will practice rolling for and consulting the hexagrams of the I Ching. We will also read the Hugo Award-winning alternate history novel **The Man in the High Castle** by Philip K. Dick, written via consultations with the I Ching. In addition, we will look at poetry, essays, and music inspired by the I Ching from artists such as Jorge Luis Borges, John Cage, and others.

**Meeting Time**: W 12:30-1:20 for 10 weeks
**Location**: CCD1 201
**Moderator(s)**: Will O’Donnell and Allie Naifeh
Howl’s Moving Castle
by Diana Wynne Jones

Sophie Hatter is the eldest of three daughters, destined to fail miserably should she ever leave home to seek her fate. But when she accidentally makes an enemy of the Witch of the Waste, Sophie finds herself transformed into an old woman. Her only chance at breaking the spell lies in the ever-moving castle in the hills: the Wizard Howl’s castle. To untangle the enchantment, Sophie must handle the heartless Howl, strike a bargain with a fire demon, and confront the Witch of the Waste head-on. Along the way, she discovers that there’s far more to Howl—and herself—than first meets the eye.

Diana Wynne Jones published more than fifty works during her career, winning, among other awards, the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement in 2007 for her incredible contributions to the genre of fantasy literature. Jones’s works are well-known for their humor and their social insight, and her style is an unforgettable pastiche of the fantasy genre, delighting in flipping well-established tropes on their heads in order to surprise and delight her readers. Howl’s Moving Castle is one of Jones’s best-known works, inspiring the Academy Award-nominated film of the same name and receiving the 2005 Phoenix Award.

Angels in America by Tony Kushner
and
The Normal Heart by Larry Kramer

The AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 90s represents one of the most significant periods in LGBTQ history, not only because it united the gay community in tragedy but also because it helped to define homosexuality as a political issue. The two award-winning plays that this group will read—Tony Kushner’s Angels in America and Larry Kramer’s The Normal Heart—examine the various political, social, and emotional contours of the time period. Reading the plays in tandem will help participants to understand these historical realities as they played out on the national stage, as well as the divisive issues within the gay activist groups that sprang up in response to the epidemic.

These two dramas will give group members a multifaceted understanding of AIDS and an appreciation for the literature that came out of the gay community during this time. If time allows, we will also watch the cinematic adaptations of these plays.
This book, *Galileo's Daughter* written by Dava Sobel, has been recommended as a way to bring to the doorstep of all Honors students, a sum up of this year’s OU 125th anniversary and to commemorate the life Galileo Galilei, a core personality who is viewed as one of the early scientific revolutionists. We will establish a connection between the themes, Galileo’s World and Galileo Today through the analysis of the letters that Galileo received from his daughter, Maria Celeste.

We will also examine Galileo’s life and the interconnectivity of human achievement in areas including science, culture, music religion, arts, politics, and philosophy.

---

*The Psychopath Test* by Jon Ronson is a thought-provoking book about mental health in the United States, including its diagnosis and treatment, highlighting psychopathy. Ronson notes the plethora of methods and treatments that have been employed in attempt to treat mental illness. The book also analyzes the disproportionate percentage of executives with psychotic traits compare to the general population. Ronson compares the traits of successful business executives to those of diagnosed psychopaths and makes some stunning conclusions. Ronson utilizes case studies and other clinical research to support the claims he makes.

The issue of mental health is a growing issue and this book sheds some well needed light on the subject and allows for a glimpse into the world of mental illness and psychopathy. The goal of this group will be to discuss the method for diagnosing and treating mental illness, consider the prevalence of psychopaths amongst executives, and understand the nature of mental health and its role in society.
Norwegian Wood

Norwegian Wood takes place on a college campus in Tokyo, during the student protests of the late 1960’s. It is the poignant story of one listless student’s romantic coming of age, set against the tense campus environment of the time. It is the fifth novel by author Haruki Murakami, known for critically acclaimed novels such as 1Q84 and The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle. This novel is unique among Murakami’s work in that it is firmly grounded in reality, lacking the magical or fantasy elements he is often known for. But the book is still dreamlike; the limited plot works to convey nostalgia and intense emotion rather than a series of exciting events.

The book revolves around Toru, a quiet and serious university student in Tokyo, who is devoted to an introspective young woman, Naoko. However, their mutual passion is marred by the tragic death of their mutual friend years before. Toru begins to adapt to campus life and the loneliness he feels there, but Naoko finds the pressures and responsibilities of life unbearable. As she retreats further into her own world, Toru finds himself drawn to a fiercely independent and sexually liberated young woman.

Meeting Time | Location
--- | ---
R 4:30-5:20 | CCD1 217
for 10 weeks

Moderator(s):
Megan Gage

---

The Best of Poe by Edgar Allen Poe and Edgar Allen Poe by Arthur Hobson Quinn

Renowned as the creator of the detective story and a master of horror, the author of “The Red Mask of Death,” “The Black Cat,” and “The Murders of the Rue Morgue,” Edgar Allan Poe seems to have derived his success from suffering and to have suffered from his success. “The Raven” and “The Tell-Tale Heart” have been read as signs of his personal obsessions, and “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “The Descent into the Maelstrom” as symptoms of his own mental collapse.

Against this tide of fancy, guesses, and amateur psychologizing, Arthur Hobson Quinn’s biography devotes itself meticulously to facts. Based on exhaustive research in the Poe family archive, Quinn extracts the life from the legend, and describes how they both were distorted by prior biographies.

If you have enjoyed any of Poe’s work or are curious about this great American author, then come join this reading group as we look into how his life influenced his work.

Meeting Time | Location
--- | ---
R 10:30-11:20 | CCD1 217
for 6 weeks

Moderator(s):
Jeremy Cleveland
and Andrea Nguyen
Informal Reading Groups Fall 2016

### Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out by Mo Yan

In his 2006 novel *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*, Chinese author Mo Yan delves into the development of China in the twentieth century through the sordid, fantastical story of a good-hearted landowner who is killed and reincarnated as different farm animals in rural China. Mo, winner of the 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature, analyzes the upheavals in Chinese society during this period with his characteristic mordant honesty, imagination, and wit.

This novel provides a thoughtful and entertaining look at the dramatic changes that have shaped China, both in the past and present.

**Meeting Time**
R 4:30-5:20

**Location**
CCD1 214

**For 10 weeks**

**Moderator(s):**
Will Goree and Jeremy Allen

### A History of the World in 6 Glasses by Tom Standage

Would you fight a war over whiskey? Can I pay you back in beer? Is the coke you had with lunch the face of the New World Order? In our busy lives, we don’t usually stop to think about what we’re drinking. We’re thirsty and it tastes good. But what we drink has a fascinating history connected to all of human civilization.

In this book, author Tom Standage explores the origins of six drinks—beer, wine, spirits, tea, coffee, and cola—and traces how they changed societies and altered the course of human history. These six drinks, 3 alcoholic and 3 caffeinated, had important social and political influences, contributing to the creation of religious and philosophical ideologies, the development of trade, and the rise and fall of empires. Interesting but easy to read, this is a book for anyone who enjoys history and hydration.

**Meeting Time**
F 11:30-12:20

**Location**
CCD1 214

**For 7 weeks**

**Moderator(s):**
Sam Moore
American Gods
by Neil Gaiman

A storm is coming . . .

Locked behind bars for three years, Shadow did his time, quietly waiting for the day when he could return to Eagle Point, Indiana. A man no longer scared of what tomorrow might bring, all he wants is to be with his beloved wife, Laura, and to start over.

But before his release, Laura and Shadow’s best friend are killed in an accident. With his life shattered and nothing to keep him tethered, Shadow accepts a job from a beguiling stranger he meets on the way home, an enigmatic man who calls himself Mr. Wednesday. A conman and rogue, Wednesday seems to know more about Shadow than Shadow does himself.

Life as Wednesday’s bodyguard, driver, and errand boy is far more interesting and dangerous than Shadow ever imagined—it is a job that takes him on a dark and strange road trip and introduces him to a host of eccentric characters whose fates are mysteriously intertwined with his own. Along the way Shadow will learn that the past never dies and that dreams, totems, legends, and myths are more real than we know. Ultimately, he will discover that beneath the placid surface of everyday life a war for the very soul of America is brewing and he is standing squarely in its path. Relevant and prescient, *American Gods* has been lauded for its brilliant synthesis of “mystery, satire, sex, horror, and poetic prose” and as a modern phantasmagoria that “distills the essence of America”.

Ulysses
by James Joyce

Stream of consciousness can be defined as “a literary style in which characters’ thoughts, feelings, and reactions are depicted in a continuous flow uninterrupted by objective description or conventional dialogue.” James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a classic and masterful example of this literary style.

The 700-page novel, published in 1922, examines the experiences of Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly Bloom. The novel spans the entire day of June 16, 1904, and relays the unfiltered thoughts of its characters so readers may truly become part of their complex minds. Joyce scorns the conventions of syntax, omits quotation marks, makes up words, and offers no distinction between the thoughts of a character and the action of the novel, so *Ulysses* is a notoriously challenging book to read. However, we hope to read portions of each episode out loud as a group and discuss the meaning of the text as we go along in order to make this book comprehensible, enjoyable, and even funny.

This novel can be approached on many different levels of seriousness: for the casual reader, the plot is plenty to consider, and for the meticulous reader, there are endless allusions to Shakespeare and Classical literature—enough, probably, to span a lifetime of study. Anyone at either of these extremes, or anyone standing somewhere in the middle, will find something to enjoy in this landmark piece of twentieth-century literature.
Lawrence in Arabia
by Scott Anderson

*Lawrence in Arabia* is an epic history following the famed T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, in his role leading the Arab revolt against Ottoman Turks during World War I. Anderson tracks how the shy Oxford academic transformed into a leader of a bedouin guerrilla army, fighting both the Turks on the battlefield and his own government in the imperial bureaucracy.

Much more than a simple recounting of Lawrence’s military exploits, this biography details Lawrence’s tortured development in a war zone, his sufferings of post-traumatic stress, and his guilt of betrayal against the Arabs. In addition, the book tracks the lives of other clandestine agents in the Middle Eastern theatre, including the German spymaster Curt Purfer, the revolutionary Zionist Aaron Aaronsohn, and American oilman William Yale. As their lives intersect, Anderson is also able to show the wider arc of the war as well as larger themes at play in the politics of the region. The multilayered narrative covers diverse topics such as imperialism, colonial competition, Arab nationalism, and the birth of Israel. While a history book, the biographical nature of the story makes it read like a novel and is approachable to those not familiar with the region or time period. An excellent text for anyone interested in the Middle East, World War I history, or fascinating tales of historical figures.

There will be a watch party of David Lean’s 1962 classic *Lawrence of Arabia* at the end of the group.

---

Giovanni’s Room
by James Baldwin

The Price of Salt
by Patricia Highsmith

In James Baldwin’s 1956 classic *Giovanni’s Room*, a young man must come to terms with his identity as he is caught between desire for another man and traditional morality. Set in 1950s Paris, this moving, imaginative novel explores alienation, love, desire, and duty through one man’s struggle to understand himself and others.

The basis of the critically-acclaimed 2015 film *Carol*, lesbian cult-classic *The Price of Salt* by Patricia Highsmith was exceptional when it was first published in 1952 for its defiance of stereotypes about homosexuality. This story of two lonely women who escape their mundane lives by loving one another is an honest look into a passionate and loving, yet forbidden, relationship.

With these two books as our guides, we will compare and contrast gay and lesbian experiences, explore how loneliness and ostracism affects people, and discuss how queerness, in the US and abroad, has evolved over time.