Meet just one hour per week with 10-15 Honors College students to discuss roughly 50 pages of reading from specific books on the topics described in the following pages. The only commitment you make is a good-faith effort to complete the reading and attend group meetings as often as you can, with the understanding there may be one or two weeks when you need to do other things. Our goal is to maximize information and enjoyment, with zero stress.

- No tuition or fees
- No quizzes or tests
- No grades
- Free books
- Read, think, and discuss important topics of mutual interest with other Honors College students

The Informal Reading Groups will begin the week of August 26th-30th and will meet for 3-15 weeks as indicated in this brochure. Books will be distributed at the first meeting. To participate in any of these groups, email your request on or after August 12th to HonorsReading@ou.edu. Groups are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, so it is helpful to indicate a second choice.
GEORGE ORWELL
Selected Great Essays
Tuesdays 9:30-10:20
Cate Center 1 101
Five Weeks

More than his novels (Animal Farm and 1984), and more than his extraordinary book-length non-fiction (Homage to Catalonia and The Road to Wigan Pier), his essays and journalism are the essential Orwell. As one critic has written, “they are Orwell the man, Orwell the thinker, Orwell the political animal.”

This group will read a selection of Orwell’s most important and best-known essays, including “Why I Write,” “Shooting an Elephant,” “Tolstoy and Shakespeare,” “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius,” and “Looking Back on the Spanish War.”

While this group will read only a small selection of Orwell’s essays, it will use a beautiful 1360-page hardbound edition that contains the largest collection available at the present time.

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.

Michael Frayn’s play, COPENHAGEN -
The controversial visit of Werner Heisenberg to Niels Bohr in 1941
Tuesdays 10:30-11:20
Cate Center 1 101
Three Weeks

This Tony Award-winning play is an explosive re-imagining of the mysterious wartime meeting between two Nobel laureates to discuss the atomic bomb. In 1941, the German physicist Werner Heisenberg made a clandestine trip to Copenhagen to see his Danish counterpart and friend Niels Bohr. Their work together on quantum mechanics and the uncertainty principle had revolutionized atomic physics. But now the world had changed and the two men were on opposite sides in a world war. Why Heisenberg went to Copenhagen and what he wanted to say to Bohr are questions that have vexed historians ever since.

In Michael Frayn’s ambitious, fiercely intelligent, and daring new play Heisenberg and Bohr meet once again to discuss the intricacies of physics and to ponder the metaphysical -- the very essence of human motivation.

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.

TEAM OF RIVALS: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln
Thursdays 9:30-10:20
Cate Center 1 101
Fifteen Weeks

Written by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, this 2005 book focuses on Lincoln’s efforts to reconcile conflicting personalities and political factions on the path to abolition and victory in the Civil War. He chose to include his three principal rivals for the Presidency (William Seward, Salmon Chase, and Edward Bates) in his cabinet.

President Barack Obama has cited this as one of his favorite books and was said to have used it as a model for constructing his own Cabinet, which included his principal rival, Hillary Clinton. The book was also the basis for the 2012 Stephen Spielberg film, Lincoln. The author was the 2010 Commencement Speaker at OU.

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.
Hannah Arendt is widely considered one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century. Arendt’s Jewish family was forced to flee Nazi Germany, and she eventually ended up in the United States where she served as lecturer and visiting scholar at many of the finest universities in the country, Berkeley, Princeton, and the University of Chicago among them.

The Human Condition is Arendt’s seminal work regarding the development of human existence. Arendt focuses on the shift in the characterization of the human condition from Plato’s political animal to the modern adaptation/mistranslation of the social animal. The difference between the vita activa (the active life of labor, work, and action) and the vita contemplativa (the life based on contemplating internal realities) is discussed at length.

Arendt’s exposition of the different realities people face - from the low-to-no-wage laborer concerned solely with survival to the Newtonian physicist purely in the realm of contemplation - has helped readers understand the human condition for over half a century.

Justine Alexander will serve as moderator for this group.
NOTE: The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, in conjunction with the Honors College, will be offering an intergenerational reading group over Deborah Feldman’s Unorthodox and Nadia Bolz-Weber’s Pastrix. This group will offer college students and senior citizens the chance to discuss these two religious memoirs.

Unorthodox is Feldman’s account of how she left the Satmar sect of the Hasidic faith and the accompanying arranged marriage. Raised under strict customs regarding all aspects of life, Feldman was able to leave only after being inspired by literary characters created by the likes of Jane Austen and Louisa May Alcott, authors she read in defiance of Satmar law.

Pastrix is a term used derogatorily by some to refer to female pastors, a position they perceive as illegitimate. In Pastrix, Nadia Bolz-Weber reclams the label and generally denounces the confining, holier-than-thou aspects of organized religion. A former stand-up comic, the tattooed Bolz-Weber had no intentions of becoming a pastor. However, when she found herself leading a friend’s funeral in a smoky comedy club surrounded by fellow alcoholics, depressives, and cynics, Bolz-Weber realized that she could be a pastor to these people.

Both memoirs cover living within and outside of different systems of faith and promise to generate stimulating, transgenerational conversations.

Dr. Marie Dallam will serve as moderator for this group.
**A THOUSAND YEARS OF NON-LINEAR HISTORY and A NEW PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIETY**  
Manuel de Landa  
*Fridays 1:30-2:20*  
*Cate Center 1 214*  
*Eight Weeks*

Manuel de Landa is a professor of contemporary philosophy at the European Graduate School in Switzerland and a visiting/adjunct professor of design and architecture at many other schools. This group will read two of the professor's most highly acclaimed books: *A New Philosophy of Society* and *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History.*

De Landa’s interest in philosophy and living spaces is evident in *A New Philosophy of Society,* which argues that valuable social analysis transcends the individual/society duality. This analysis is better served by a paradigm of assemblages, i.e. that social entities at every scale are best analyzed in terms of their components (which are themselves assemblages of yet smaller components). These components relate to the larger assemblage in a heterogenous, non-linear way.

Manuel de Landa invokes a similar dynamical systems theory to challenge the traditional view in *A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History.* Rather than focusing on what his European Graduate School bio labels “teleological notions of anthropocentric progression,” de Landa advances an understanding of history as an understanding of complex systems composed of both heterogeneous and homogeneous aggregates of matter. Thus, history becomes an amorphous, self-adaptive amalgamation of interconnected, not necessarily continuous, developments.

**CAT’S CRADLE and GOD BLESS YOU, MR. ROSEWATER - Kurt Vonnegut's shocking and satirical fourth and fifth novels**  
*Fridays 1:30-2:20*  
*David L. Boren Hall 182*  
*Seven Weeks*

This group will read two books consecutively, both by the highly regarded American writer Kurt Vonnegut, author of *Slaughterhouse Five.* Written in 1963, *Cat’s Cradle,* his fourth novel, is an apocalyptic satire that is both blackly fatalistic and hilariously funny. It has been praised by critics as “one of the 20th century’s most important works.”

Published in 1965, his fifth novel focuses on Eliot Rosewater, drunk, volunteer fireman, Harvard graduate, and primary trustee of the fabulously wealthy Rosewater foundation. When Rosewater is about to attempt a noble experiment with human nature, his relatives attempt to have him declared insane.

When Vonnegut graded all his books – “comparing myself with myself” – *Cat’s Cradle* is one of only two that received an “A+” grade, and *Mr. Rosewater* received an “A.” One reviewer has said that “the one unifying thread that runs throughout all of his works, is the knowledge that the universe is a Big Damn Mess, and that’s a terrible thing, but also pretty funny when you stop to think about it.”

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.
HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED: 
Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character

Mondays 4:30-5:20
David L. Boren Hall 182
Five Weeks

Psychologists and neuroscientists have learned a lot in the past few decades about where the skills needed for success come from and how they are developed,” author Paul Tough writes, and what they’ve discovered can be summed up in a sentence: character is created by encountering and especially overcoming failure.

In this absorbing and important book, Tough explains why American children from both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum are missing out on these essential experiences. The offspring of affluent parents are insulated from adversity, and while poor children face no end of challenges, there is often little support to help them turn such obstacles into character-enhancing triumph.

Dean Gregg Garn of the College of Education and Prof. David Ray will serve as co-moderators for this group.

HUMAN ACTION -
An introduction to the Austrian school of economics

Mondays 2:30-3:20
Cate Center 1 214
Fifteen Weeks

Ludwig von Mises was a central European philosopher and an early progenitor of the widely influential Austrian school of economics. His treatise Human Action is concerned with monetary economics and the argument for market economies. It also puts forward the notion of praxeology, a general theory of human action, as a means for determining correct economic action.

Nobel Laureate and fellow Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek described von Mises as “a tremendously efficient executive, the kind of man who, as was said of John Stuart Mill, because he does a normal day’s work in two hours, always has a clear desk and time to talk about anything. I came to know him as one of the best educated and informed men I have ever known.”

Wade Craig will serve as moderator for this group.

MONEY-DRIVEN MEDICINE:
The Real Reason Health Care Costs So Much

Fridays 2:30-3:20
David L. Boren Hall 182
Eight Weeks

Written by financial journalist Maggie Mahar, this book explains how we went from the individual family doctor who made house calls to the bureaucratic, faceless, broken system we have today, and why the US spent 7.1% of GDP for health care in 1970, but 16% by 2005, and 18% today. She traces how today’s market-driven medical system emerged over the past century thanks to trends that gradually stripped power from doctors and gave it to corporations, turning patients into profit centers.

No one is spared in Mahar’s thoroughly researched and carefully reasoned study, which is non-ideological and lets the facts speak for themselves. Money-Driven Medicine inspired a documentary film of the same name.

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.
**THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD**  
Zora Neale Hurston &  
**MRS. DALLOWAY**  
Virginia Woolf &  
**THE BELL JAR**  
Sylvia Plath

*Tuesdays 12:00-12:50  
Cate Center 1 101  
Fifteen Weeks*

These three books examine the position and trials placed upon women in three distinct societies: early 20th-century Florida, post-WWI England, and post-WWII US.

*Mrs. Dalloway* recounts a day in the life of aging Mrs. Dalloway as she organizes that night’s tea-kegger and observes how dissatisfied everyone, herself included, must be or obviously is.

*Their Eyes Were Watching God* is the story of an African-American woman in southern Florida and her three husbands. In bluesy style, the first one she didn’t want, the second one she didn’t want, and the third one she wanted—but she had to kill.

*The Bell Jar* is the *roman à clef* of confessionalist poet Sylvia Plath as she struggles with mental illness and womanhood in a world that today seems pre-pharmaceutical (electroshock therapy, anyone?) Humor aside, a must-join group for those concerned with good writing, the evolution of women in society, or who just need a few more sad thoughts in their lives.

Cait Walsh will serve as moderator for this group.

---

**ULYSSES**  
James Joyce &  
**ULYSSES ANNOTATED**  
Don Gifford

*Fridays 3:00-3:50  
Cate Center 1 214  
Twelve Weeks*

The book that really needs no introduction, *Ulysses*’ stream-of-consciousness technique, careful structuring, and experimental prose - full of puns, parodies, and allusions - set the novel firmly among the modernist greats. In fact, the Modern Library placed *Ulysses* atop its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century. Highly praised, but often maligned, *Ulysses* remains a divisive novel and is labeled alternately as perfect or precocious.

Roughly mirroring the structure of Homer’s *Odyssey* (e.g. Leopold Bloom to Odysseus, Molly Bloom to Penelope, and Stephen Dedalus to Telemachus), *Ulysses* covers, very meticulously, a day in the life of Leopold Bloom, a part-Jewish canvasser living in Dublin. If you can navigate through the many frequently obscure references (which this group will do easily via Don Gifford’s *Ulysses Annotated*), *Ulysses* provides a story with breadth and depth paralleled by few and surpassed by even fewer.

Alexander Aria and Jackson Haffener will serve as moderators for this group.
**The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down**

- **Author:** Annie Fadiman
- **Reading and Discussion Group:** The winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for General Nonfiction in 1997, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* depicts the clash of Western and traditional cultures in stunning clarity with the story of three-month-old Lia Lee. Lia Lee, the daughter of Hmong immigrants, experiences seizures and is diagnosed with epilepsy by American doctors. Her parents, however, are steeped in Hmong tradition, believing that illnesses are caused by misalignments in the spiritual world, and diagnose their daughter with *quag dab peg* - the spirit catches you and you fall down. Lia Lee’s case becomes a tragic exemplar of cultural miscommunication as her doctors cling unflinchingly to Western medicine without regard to her parent’s cultural apprehensions.

   Complementing Lia Lee’s misfortune, Faidman also covers the Hmong people’s unfortunate circumstances regarding the partly American-caused war in Laos and the difficulties of assimilation and discrimination inherent to immigration.  

   Julie Hall and Katie Shauberger will serve as moderators for this group.

---

**Friday Night Lights**

- **Author:** H.G. Bissinger
- **Reading and Discussion Group:** Sports Illustrated’s fourth best sports book of all time, *Friday Night Lights* follows the Permian Panthers high school football team of Odessa, Texas during the 1988 season. Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, H. G. Bissinger examines the effect of big-time high school football on small-town America and on the lives of the deified players.

   The Permian Panthers were, at the time, among the most successful programs in Texas, having won four championships in the last twenty-four years. The team’s booster club is among the biggest social organizations in Odessa, a town greatly affected by the booms and busts of the oil industry. The teams excellence provides some semblance of stability for Odessa.

   Bissinger spends the year living among the people whose lives revolve around Friday night games and he finds both salvation and damnation in the fans’ dedication. *Friday Night Lights* provides a compelling insight into the uniquely American experience of a town’s rise and fall at the hands, and feet, of 17-year-old amateur athletes.

   Kunal Naik will serve as moderator for this group.

---

**LA GLOIRE DE MON PÈRE**

- **Author:** Marcel Pagnol
- **Reading and Discussion Group:** Translated as *My Father’s Glory*, the book is the first in filmmaker and French-Academy member Marcel Pagnol’s autobiographical series, *Souvenirs d’enfance* ("Childhood Memories"). Marcel’s father Joseph, a staunchly atheist public school teacher, has moved his family to Marseille from Marcel’s birthplace in the country.

   The novel deals largely with the relationship between Marcel’s father and uncle Jules, a rugged Roman Catholic. Conflict arises between the two men not only over religion but also because Jules lords his hunting prowess over Joseph. The bulk of the story takes place on a hunting trip, during which Marcel surreptitiously accompanies Jules and Joseph. Marcel is forced to reconcile his father’s philosophy and admonitions with the glory now sought at the end of a rifle.

   Elizabeth Hurd will serve as moderator for this group.

---

**NOTE:** Continuing the success of previous Spanish and Arabic-language reading groups, the reading and discussion of Marcel Pagnol's *La Gloire de Mon Père* will take place in French.
Chilean poet and author Roberto Bolaño (1953-2003) was a towering presence in Spanish-language literature of the late twentieth century. Bolaño began his career as a leftist activist and a literary enfant terrible known for barging uninvited into poetry readings. He is now most renowned for his fiction, which treats the jarring and violent experiences of his Latin-American contemporaries with dark humor, complex symbolism, and inescapable ambiguity.

This reading group will discuss three of his shorter works – *By Night in Chile*, *Amulet*, and *Distant Star*, and will conclude with *The Savage Detectives*, which Bolaño called “a love letter to my generation.”

The Bolaño group will also be the first (officially) bilingual Honors Reading Group, and members will be able to request books in Spanish or English. The group will discuss the impact of the translation and the distinct experiences of the reading in each language.

Arthur Dixon will serve as moderator for this group.

This book became a best-seller by delighting both scientists and humanists. Author Alan Lightman, who teaches both physics and writing at MIT, uses simple, lyrical, and literal details to locate Einstein precisely in a place and time -- Berne, Switzerland, spring 1905, when he was a patent clerk privately working on his bizarre, unheard-of theory of relativity.

The book takes flight when Einstein takes to his bed and we share his dreams, 30 little fables about places where time behaves quite differently. It’s a mind-stretching meditation by a scientist who’s been to the far edge of physics and is back with wilder tales than Marco Polo’s.

This is a repeat of what has been the most successful and popular reading group at the Honors College.

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this reading group.

Murray Rothbard’s *For A New Liberty* is the first modern manifesto for free market anarchists and is a critical text for understanding the tenets of libertarian thought.

In contrast to the stance of his famous contemporary Friedrich Hayek, Rothbard proposes the complete disintegration of the state, not merely its minimization. The book begins with a short overview of libertarian heritage, moving right along to the essential creed of any libertarian, and then--having caught the elusive golden-egg-laying goose of manifestoes--actually goes into detailed explanations of how these creeds would be applied in the real world.

If you’re a would-be libertarian needing some clarity, or another college liberal in the hunt for a rigorous counter-argument, then look no further.

Wade Craig will serve as moderator for this group.
THE REAL ALL-AMERICANS:
The Team That Changed A Game, A People, and A Nation

Sundays 4:00-4:50
David L. Boren Hall 182
Four Weeks

*The Real All Americans* is the account of how the Carlisle Indian Industrial School came to be the foremost football power during 1911-1912. The book tracks the history of the closing of the west to the ascension of football as the national pastime, beginning with a military battle in 1866 and culminating with the pseudo-battle between West Point and Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1912, featuring both Jim Thorpe and Dwight Eisenhower. Sally Jenkins uncovers the intriguing power of sport to bring disparate groups together behind a common goal.

This group will be a collaboration between the Honors College and the Athletic Department including both Honors students as well as scholar-athletes.

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.

STEALING LINCOLN'S BODY
Thomas Craughwell

Thursdays 4:30-5:20
Cate Center 1 201
Seven Weeks

On the eve of the 1876 presidential election, a gang of Chicagoan counterfeiters, in a ploy to bail out their engraver, decided to mix body-snatching and dead-people-ransoming...and failed ridiculously. Only in part because two of the gang were Secret Service members whose very reason for employment was to catch counterfeiters. If, like most of us, your knowledge of U.S. history--and your interest in the subject--ended with the end of some odd semester, then 1876 probably means nothing to you except Reconstruction--and maybe Rutherford B. Hayes (whoever he was). In addition to chronicling every hilarious nuance of the titular story, Thomas Craughwell’s *Stealing Lincoln’s Body* provides the reader with the historical context to understand what else was going on as Reconstruction ended and the U.S. approached the 20th century.

Michael Reynolds will serve as moderator for this group.

THE BLACK SWAN:
The Impact of the Highly Improbable

Fridays 11:30-12:20
Cate Center 1 214
Eleven Weeks

A book having nothing to do with Natalie Portman or ballet, but rather with the phenomena of unforeseeable uncertainties and their impacts, Nassim Taleb’s *The Black Swan* examines the effects of these unforeseeable events across multiple disciplines, including history, economics, aesthetics, and psychology. Taleb says: “the normal is often irrelevant. Almost everything in social life is produced by rare but consequential shocks and jumps.”

Spending 36 weeks at the top of the New York Times bestseller list--no doubt in large part due to the elegant cover--*The Black Swan*, extreme though it may be, is likely to be of some consequence; it will doubtlessly make for a good discussion group.

Daniel Meschter will serve as moderator for this group.
EMMA
Jane Austen &
JANE EYRE
Charlotte Brontë
Fridays 5:00-5:50
David L. Boren Hall 182
Fifteen Weeks

These two classic novels are two perennial crests on the waves of Anglophiles. Jane Eyre details the youth, rise, and eventual marriage (ha!) of the poor, orphaned, but educated governess Jane Eyre, as she struggles to find a home, to balance passion and religious conscience, and to live autonomously in an overtly patriarchal English society.

Both novels are proto-feminist, but Emma takes a different path. Emma is a beautiful, well-to-do twenty-something with no interest in marrying for herself, but rather in being an amateur matchmaker. Thus begins a romantic comedy of manners, set again in early 19th century England (or perhaps in 1996 Beverly Hills).

Miram Mezzetti will serve as moderator for this group.

THE GREAT GATSBY and
THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED
F. Scott Fitzgerald
Fridays 12:30-1:20
Cate Center 1 214
Eleven Weeks

One of the most talented writers in American literature, F. Scott Fitzgerald was famous for his incisive portrayals of the generation which, in a rare combination of sensitivity and greed, simultaneously popularized jazz and conspicuous consumption.

The Beautiful and Damned is Fitzgerald’s second novel, detailing the life of an heir as he tries to figure out what to do while he’s waiting on his inheritance. First he goes to war, and then he gets married, at which point the novel becomes markedly autobiographical, Fitzgerald having recently begun his tumultuous marriage with Zelda Sayre.

The Great Gatsby is Fitzgerald’s most famous novel, and is universally regarded as one of the Great American Novels, if not the greatest. Its narrator, Nick Carraway, is a recent college graduate who moves to Long Island in the summer of 1922 for his work. In Long Island, he becomes the fascinated observer, and somewhat-willing instrument, in the machinations of two incredibly rich men vying for one woman: Carraway’s cousin Daisy.

Kunal Naik and Adam Avoian will serve as moderators for this group.
First it should be noted that Shirley Jackson wrote “The Lottery”—yes, that ubiquitous short story you read years ago about the little village lottery no one wants to win. Ms. Jackson was also a novelist, and her work is increasingly a subject of critical studies today. *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* was her final novel.

Told in the first-person from the perspective of Mary Katherine “Merricat” Blackwood (one of last century’s best characters in fiction), the novel examines the lives of an ostracized family in New England. Merricat, her sister Constance and their ill uncle Julian live in a large house, some acres away from the nearby village. Six years before the events of the novel, Merricat’s parents, younger brother and aunt were all mysteriously poisoned, and since then the surviving family members have been outcasts from the village. Only Merricat returns to the village, twice weekly to get provisions and library books. Soon Merricat feels a new surge of animosity toward her family, coincidentally coupled with the unexpected arrival of her cousin, Charles.

Haley Hinsberger will serve as moderator for this group.

The -ism without which art would still be antiquated, modernism describes the artistic movement responding to large changes during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the Western world, specifically rapid urbanization, the development of modern industrial societies, and the horrors of World War I.

As Ezra Pound urged, modernists strived to “Make it new!” In rejecting realism and Enlightenment certainty, self-conscious modernists took the artifacts of the past, broke them, and created non-antiquated art for the previously inconceivable world.

This group hopes to give a far-from-comprehensive, snapshot of modernist authors starting with Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground* (considered among the first existential novels) and will continue with selections from the works of Kafka, Joyce, Tolstoy, Camus, Rilke, and others. This ambitious group will meet twice a week to account for the vast and varied works covered.

Luis Molina will serve as moderator for this group.
The God Species: Saving the Planet in the Age of Humans

Mondays 11:30-12:20
David L. Boren Hall 182
Seven Weeks

If you think you understand how to be an effective fighter of global warming, and how to do it without compromising human potential, Mark Lynas probably has a few things to ask you.

In The God Species, he argues that we should stop using fossil fuels ASAP and stop putting off alternative energy while waiting for the perfect tech. So far so good? He also thinks we should amp up the genetic engineering of food, given that we as a species can (should?) grow indefinitely, and that the world market is ultimately responsible enough to keep vital ecosystems above water (pun intended). Another good group for lively—but self-consciously temperate—debate.

Chris Bender will serve as moderator for this group.

The History of Love
Nicole Krauss

Thursdays 3:00-3:50
Cate Center 1 201
Six Weeks

Nicole Krauss’ The History of Love is also the history of loss, exile, and literature. Leopold “Leo” Gursky, a Jewish ten-year-old who finds love in pre-occupied Poland with Alma Mereminski, who inspires Leo to write three romances over their first decade together. The first is too realistic, the second is too romantic, but the third, “The History of Love,” dedicated to Leo’s lifelong commitment to Alma, is just right.

Tragically, Alma’s father, fearing rising fascism, sends her to America. After years in hiding, Leo follows only to find that Alma has remarried and is raising Leo’s son with another man. Having lost love, Leo hopes to recover a copy of his book that he entrusted to a Polish friend who has since relocated to Chile and published the novel as his own. Leo’s self-published obituary, guiltily featured in the Chilean edition, finishes “He fell in love. It was his life,” but Krauss relates an intricate, thought-provoking, and empathetic tale along the way.

Michael Mandeville will serve as moderator for this group.

The Art of Failure: An Essay on the Pain of Playing Video Games

Fridays 9:30-10:20
David L. Boren Hall 182
Four Weeks

Author Jesper Juul is an assistant professor at the New York University Game Center. Before that, he worked at MIT, the Danish Design School and the IT University of Copenhagen. He has a PhD in video game theory (such things exist!) and besides teaching and writing about video games, he also develops them.

While we may think of video games as being “fun,” in this book Juul claims that this is almost entirely mistaken. Games frustrate us and often make us feel inadequate or incompetent. Yet games also motivate us to play more, in order to escape that inadequacy, and the feeling of escaping failure (often by improving skills) is a central enjoyment of games. Games, writes Juul, are the art of failure: the singular art form that sets us up for failure and allows us to experience it and experiment with it.

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.
Sheryl Sandberg--recently on the cover of TIME with the caption “Don’t Hate Her Because She’s Successful”—had worked at Google before becoming the first female board director at Facebook, where she was largely responsible for turning the social media site into the profit juggernaut we know today.

Presently, she is famous for inspiring the “Lean In” movement with her book of the same name. The book examines the barriers women face in the workplace which are preventing them from taking leadership positions, a woman’s “double day” shift and the devaluation of homemaking in our society, and the internalization of societal discrimination which allows these problems to self-perpetuate.

Alyssa Boutelle will serve as moderator for this group.

Edward Saïd (1935-2003) was a Palestinian-American professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Described as “the most powerful voice” advocating Palestine, Saïd’s best-known work is Orientalism, which presents the vast and insidious effects of Eurocentrism on any studies of the East undertaken by the West. A quote by Saïd from 1980, two years after the publication of Orientalism, shows the alarming persistence of these prejudices:

“So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab–Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world, presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.”

Thomas Parker Simpkins will serve as moderator for this group.

In Outliers: The Story of Success, Malcolm Gladwell recounts and accounts for a vast and varied set of successful people. Whether Bill Gates or elite Canadian hockey players, Gladwell examines outliers - the incredibly brilliant, the incredibly successful - in order to explain why certain people perform better than others.

Whereas other profiles of success and self-help books have focused on what these people are like, Gladwell focuses on where outliers are from: culture, family, and other idiosyncratic aspects of their upbringing (as obscure as the month in which they were born). Excellently written and well researched, Outliers is both an enjoyable and informative read.

Luke Bartz will serve as moderator for this group.
**U.S.A TRILOGY**  
John Dos Passos  

*Time and Location TBD*

**NOTE:** This reading group is a continuation of the Spring reading group and will begin with *1919*, the second novel in the trilogy.

John Dos Passos’s masterpiece the *U.S.A.* trilogy is comprised of *The 42nd Parallel*, *1919*, and *The Big Money*. Dos Passos implements four modes of innovative storytelling to describe America during the first three decades of the 20th century; fictional narrative, “the camera eye” or stream of consciousness, “newsreels” including headlines and article fragments, and biographies of historical figures. *U.S.A.* features the development of several fictional characters throughout this historical period and is largely pessimistic about the political and economic direction of the United States after the end of World War I. Although finished in 1936, *U.S.A.* remains influential and was ranked 23rd on the Modern Library list of the 100 Best English Language Books of the 20th Century.

Dr. Hamerla will coordinate with the members of this group to determine a meeting time.

**CLOUD ATLAS**  
David Mitchell  

*Tuesdays 4:30-5:20*  
*Cate Center 1 201*  
*Eleven Weeks*

*Cloud Atlas* is the story of someone reading stories, but the reader (you) reads the stories that that “someone” is reading, and then reads the story about that “someone.” Check? Check. Ah, the universality of human kind, of all stories...

The book takes you through six separate stories and several centuries, from the 1800’s South Pacific to a primitive post-apocalyptic Hawaii. In between are tales of a bisexual composer, an intrepid journalist, an aging publisher, and a dystopian future in Korea, with writing styles ranging from comedy to mystery and thriller. Each story is linked to the preceding one, and each story, after being interrupted, is concluded in reverse-chronological order, finally leaving the reader where she began.

Luis Molina will serve as moderator for this group.

**MOSTLY HARMLESS**  
"The fifth book in the increasingly inaccurately named *Hitchhiker's trilogy*"  

*Thursdays 3:00-3:50*  
*Cate Center 1 214*  
*Twelve Weeks*

*NOTE:* This reading group is a continuation of the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* reading group.

*Mostly Harmless* covers the continuing adventures of the rarely intrepid and often inept Arthur Dent as he travels the Galaxy. Arthur donates a great deal of biological material to finance his journey before settling down as a sandwich maker on Lamuella.

Arthur’s former travelling companion, Trillian, using the only available human sperm, gives birth to the aptly named Random Dent. In order to pursue her career as a journalist, Trillian leaves Random with Arthur, who, unsurprisingly, doesn’t get along very well with the teenage girl. While bored on the uneventful planet, Random discovers the *Hitchhiker's Guide* Mk. II, the publishing of which is now controlled by Vogons, and sets off on an appropriately ridiculous quest to find the planet of her ancestors.

Christi Connolly and TJ Jensen will serve as moderators for this group.
The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society
Mary Ann Shaffer & Annie Barrows

Mondays 1:30-2:20
Cate Center 1 201
Seven Weeks

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society recounts tales of the inhabitants of the German-occupied Channel Islands. The novel's main character, author Juliet Ashton, receives a letter from a Guernsey farmer (and member of The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society) requesting help in finding a biography of Charles Lamb. Juliet is compelled to respond by the unusual club-name, which turns out to be an impromptu cover for a group of curfew breakers and the peculiar literary interests of the farmer. The book is composed of Ashton's correspondences with the farmer and other members of the society along with her eventual journey to Guernsey.

The New York Times Bestseller, was started by Mary Ann Shaffer and completed by her niece, Annie Barrows, upon Shaffer's death.

Whitney Thompson will serve as moderator for this group.

Watchmen
Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons

Fridays 3:30-4:20
Cate Center 1 201
Nine Weeks

Studied in comic book stores and college classes alike, Watchmen chronicles the fall from grace of a group of superheroes plagued by all-too-human failings. Their troubles begin with the paranoid delusions of a half-insane hero, Rorschach. But is Rorschach really insane or has he in fact uncovered a plot to murder superheroes and, even worse, millions of innocent civilians? On the run from the law, Rorschach reunites with his former teammates in a desperate attempt to save the world and their lives.

Following two generations of masked superheroes from the close of World War II to the icy shadow of the Cold War, Watchmen challenges (and perhaps murders) the idea of superheroism while crafting an excellent story that transcends the genre.

Garrett Hicks will serve as moderator for this group.

Season of Migration to the North
Tayeb Salih

Tuesdays 4:00-4:50
Cate Center 1 214
Eight Weeks

NOTE: This is an Arabic-language group (in conjunction with the Arabic Flagship Program). The book is written in Modern Standard Arabic and discussion will take place mostly in Arabic.

This novel by the late Sudanese author Tayeb Salih has been considered the most important Arab novel of the twentieth century and it is a crucial part of any library of post-colonial literature. Written in 1966, the story follows the narrator's return to his native home on the Nile River after spending years studying in Europe. He meets a mysterious old man who reveals his own adventures abroad, weaving personal hardship with sex, pride, love, and power. Conflict and tragedy inevitably tie in as the narrator seeks his true identity through these stories and his own experiences.

Chase Smithburg will serve as moderator for this group.
Surprising Benefits of Informal Reading Groups at the OU Honors College

[Excerpts from a letter from Jordan Rogers, engineering major and Honors College alumnus]

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 50 pages required for both books each week.

Since my epiphany, if it can so be called, I have required myself to read 50 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 90 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.