Informal Reading Groups
Spring Semester 2015

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 are unable to attend.

- No tuition or fees
- No quizzes or tests
- No grades
- Free books
- Discuss important topics of mutual interest with other Honors College students

Reading groups will begin the week of January 19th and will meet for 3 to 15 weeks as indicated in this brochure. Books will be distributed at the first meeting, or at the Honors Reading Program Open House the first week of the semester.

To participate in any of these groups, email your request after Sunday, January 4th to HonorsReading@ou.edu or sign up at the Open House. Groups are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, so it is helpful to indicate several choices.
By Pulitzer Prize-winner Lawrence Wright, and called one of the “Ten Best Books of 2014” in the New York Times, this is a day-by-day account of the very tough 1978 negotiations between Israel and Egypt that were brokered by President Jimmy Carter. Interspersed within the daily emotional roller coaster is an excellent summary of early Zionism and the Holocaust; violent conflicts with the British Mandate in Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s; the creation of Israel; the 1948 war and the expulsion of the Palestinians; the 1956 Suez war; the Six-Day War of 1967 and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and the Sinai; and the 1973 Yom Kippur war.

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

Winner of the National Book Award, this highly acclaimed book “masterfully captures the story of our nation’s greatest environmental disaster.” Reviewers have called it “dramatic, vivid, and heart-wrenching.” One said “it haunts the reader from the first page” and “this is can’t-put-it-down history.”

The disaster was man-made, as Egan shows: the plains weren’t suited to farming, and plowing up the grass to plant wheat, along with a confluence of economic disaster — the Depression — and natural disaster — eight years of drought — resulted in an ecological and human catastrophe that Egan details with stunning specificity.

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

Cory Doctorow is a science fiction novelist, blogger and technology activist. He is the co-editor of the popular weblog Boing Boing and a contributor to The Guardian, the New York Times, Publishers Weekly, Wired and many others. He was formerly Director of European Affairs for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a nonprofit civil liberties group that defends freedom in technology law, policy standards and treaties.

Billed as a guide for perplexed creators about how to make a living in the Internet Era, this book is actually a populist manifesto for the information revolution. Its basic advice to creators is easy to grasp: aspiring novelists, journalists, musicians and other artists should recognize the Web as an unprecedented promotional medium rather than a revenue source.

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.
THE ACCIDENTAL UNIVERSE
by Alan Lightman

Mondays 11:30 to 12:20
217 Cate Center 1
3 to 4 weeks

Trained in physics, the author is MIT’s first professor with a joint appointment in science and the humanities. In this book, he explains the emerging consensus among theoretical physicists that our own universe is only one among countless alternate universes, universes where the properties of matter and energy may differ significantly from our own. Physicists call this “the multiverse.” If the multiverse concept is true — and, as Lightman points out, it’s hard to believe we’ll ever be able to conclusively test it — then, he writes, “the philosophical ethos of science is torn from its roots.” That ethos rests on the conviction that science is moving us toward a more and more complete understanding of the laws of nature and that “these basic principles are so restrictive that only one self-consistent universe is possible, like a crossword puzzle with only one solution.” But this may no longer be the case.

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

DOCTORED: THE DISILLUSIONMENT OF AN AMERICAN PHYSICIAN
by Sandeep Jauhar

Wednesdays 11:30 to 12:20
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
Feb. 25th to April 15th

Called “a passionate and necessary book” by Siddhartha Mukherjee, this well-written book describes an increasingly dysfunctional health care system and asks the difficult questions about the future of medicine in the US. The New York Times called it “extraordinary, brave, and even shocking.” It critiques overtreatment, cronyism and cover-your-ass medical care. The author, a cardiologist, describes the “collective malaise” infecting the American medical profession as he confronts his own complicity and shattered ideals.

NOTE: This group will consist of up to 10 students and 10 older adults who are part of OU’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). This intergenerational reading group will meet in the CCE Forum Building. The group begins Feb. 25th and runs through April 15th.

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

DARK POOLS
by Scott Patterson

Mondays 1:30 to 2:20
217 Cate Center 1
6 to 8 weeks

In this fascinating and disturbing book, Wall Street Journal reporter Scott Patterson describes the development of software and lightning-fast networks that have permitted high-frequency traders to take over the stock market as they zip in and out of stocks thousands of times per second. The New York Times called this book “more comprehensive and more persuasive” than Michael Lewis’ recent best-seller, Flash Boys.

The plumbing was first built by an unlikely alliance between Staten Island traders and a programming nerd named Josh Levine. Eventually astrophysicists joined in. Together, they retooled the U.S. stock market into a speed machine unlike anything ever imagined. The irony is a wide range of unintended consequences, including much greater instability. This is “easily the most entertaining and accessible book to cover the new world of stock trading.”

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.
Simultaneously used by intellectuals as a guide for their investigations and read by novices as an introduction to the economic way of thinking, Murray Rothbard’s magnum opus develops the Austrian school of economics beginning with the basic logic of choice and drawing out its implications to present explanations of vast economic phenomena. Where other schools of economics begin with a series of assumptions about the nature of an ideal economy and then use empirical data to verify their theories, the Austrian school begins with an analysis of methodology. Finding most economic models unsatisfactory, Austrian thinkers have developed a system of analysis that produces a unique understanding of economics. By analyzing institutions and understanding the actions of individuals, this network of ideas explains why rational behavior looks radically different in various settings and gives recommendations for the ideal environment to unleash human innovation and cooperation.

Wade Craig and Gregory Boyle will serve as moderators for this group.

In 1959 an overzealous Baptist minister named Nathan Price drags his wife and four daughters deep into the heart of the Congo on a mission to save the unenlightened souls of Africa. The five women narrate the novel. From the outset, their attitudes cover a wide spectrum. The mother passively accepts the turn of events. 15-year-old beauty queen Rachel resents her separation from normal teen life. 5-year-old adventurer Ruth May is both excited and frightened. 14-year-old Leah, who shares her father’s ardent religious faith, is enthusiastic. Leah’s twin, Adah, merely views the move, as she does all of life, with a wry and cynical detachment.

One thing that the women share, however, is the unwavering faith that they are carrying with them a culture far superior to the one already existing in the village of Kilanga, and that they will therefore instantly be masters of their new domain.

Dallas Milligan and Emily Ratliff will serve as moderators for this group.

Janet Malcolm, who is an extraordinary journalistic author, writes with great sensitivity about Freudian Theory and the odd world of psychoanalysis. Within the book, she describes Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Sanskrit scholar, psychoanalyst and anti-Freudian), K. R. Eissler (who for a time oversaw the Sigmund Freud Archives in London) and Peter Swales (self-taught Freudian and former assistant to the Rolling Stones).


Prof. Nancy Mergler will serve as moderator for this group.
**GOOD-BYE TO ALL THAT**  
by Robert Graves &  
**ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT**  
by Erich Maria Remarque  

*Tuesdays 10:00 to 10:50*  
*101 Cate Center 1*  
*13 weeks*

We will read two books that view the First World War from the trenches, literally. The first is *Good-Bye to All That* by Robert Graves. In this autobiography the author looks back at his experiences both before and after WWI from a sublime, satiric, critical and often humorous perspective. It is considered one of the most important memoirs of the conflict.

The second is Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Unlike Graves’s reminiscence, Remarque’s is a fictional account, albeit one that is viewed by many as the most important and hard-hitting literature ever written on the First World War and, to some, the most important war novel of all time. Together these books demonstrate the folly of the war and the way it defined not only the lives of the millions of men and women who endured its hardships, but also the way it changed the nature of war itself and, to a large degree, defined the 20th century.

*(If you are considering enrolling in “The Great War and the Twentieth Century” at Oxford this summer, you should also give serious consideration to attending this reading group. These are two of the assigned texts!)*

Prof. Rich Hamerla will serve as moderator for this group.

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**SELECTED BOOKS**  
FROM THE 33 1/3 SERIES  

*Thursdays 6:00 to 6:50*  
*201 Cate Center 1*  
*15 weeks*

Discussing books about the albums *Let’s Talk about Love*, by Céline Dion; *Selected Ambient Works Volume II* by Aphex Twin; *If You’re Feeling Sinister* by Belle and Sebastian; *Kid A* by Radiohead; and *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* by Kanye West.

These books, from the 33 1/3 series, concern music albums that are not just considered to be classics, but are capable of fundamentally altering the way we interact with music. The first, about Céline Dion’s titanic *Let’s Talk about Love*, analyzes music criticism and the bases of taste, expanded with additional contributions from figures like Krist Novoselic (Nirvana) and James Franco.

Kanye West’s *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* and Belle and Sebastian’s *If You’re Feeling Sinister*, though practically stylistic opposites, both reflect on artistic egoism and how the Internet has affected our lives, especially our interpersonal relationships. Radiohead’s *Kid A* examines the connectedness of time and music, and what can go into an album besides studio sessions. Finally, Aphex Twin’s *Selected Ambient Works Vol. 2* distorts our conception of language, communication and interpretation into a nearly unrecognizable state.

Previous experience with these albums is not needed.

Ryan Bird will serve as moderator for this group.
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an important writer for students to encounter, as her stories delve into issues of race, gender and identity through powerful and genuine character development.

Americanah is her newest work, and it is a particularly interesting read because it deals with Western problems of social conformity from an outside perspective — as two Africans leave Nigeria and grapple with Western culture and what it means to be black.

Many OU students are probably already familiar with Adichie’s ideas from her TED Talk, “We Should All Be Feminists,” that was featured in Beyonce’s “Flawless,” and will enjoy hearing more of what she has to say about our modern social justice issues.

Stephanie Allred will serve as moderator for this group.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Americanah

In Dan Washburn’s The Forbidden Game: Golf and the Chinese Dream, golf is used as a unique and personal lens through which to view “the less glamorous realities of a nation’s awkward and arduous evolution from developing to developed: corruption, environmental neglect, disputes over rural land rights and an ever-widening gap between rich and poor.”

Jeremy Allen and Kiersten Strachan will serve as moderators for this group.

Once banned by Chairman Mao for being too “bourgeois,” the game of golf has become an integral part of China’s highly political business environment, despite a ban on course development for the past decade. Golf remains a niche sport in China due to its high cost to play: nearly a billion people in China live on less than $5 a day; the average round of golf is $150.

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Jeremy Allen and Kiersten Strachan will serve as moderators for this group.
In his first novel, author David Wong combines the genres of humor and horror into a work that has been described as “a mash-up of Douglas Adams and Stephen King.” *John Dies at the End* adroitly spoofs the horror genre while simultaneously offering up a genuinely horrifying story. The terror is rooted in a substance known as soy sauce, a paranormal psychoactive that opens video store clerk Wong’s — and his penis-obsessed friend John’s — minds to higher levels of consciousness. The book’s smart take on fear manages to tap into readers’ existential dread on one page, then have them laughing the next.

Jacob Downs and Jordan Abney will serve as moderators for this group.

*Dracula* may be the most famous literary vampire, but he definitely wasn’t the first. *Carmilla*, by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, was published in 1872, a full 25 years before *Dracula*. The narrator, Laura, tells the story of her mysterious encounter with the beautiful lesbian vampire Carmilla. The novella has recently been adapted into a webseries of the same name, which transplants the story to a modern-day university but keeps all the Gothic horror of the original. This group will first read the novella and then watch the webseries. Whitney Thompson will serve as moderator for this group.

*Blankets* depicts a young boy growing up in Wisconsin, dealing with bullies, his very religious family, sexual abuse and his first romance. *Fangirl* follows a girl feeling independence for the first time, no longer attached to her twin sister, as she starts her first year at college. She uses fanfiction to escape the struggles of reality and also deals with a first romance.

This reading group will compare the two novels’ issues and look at the differences that may have existed if *Blankets* had been written from the point of view of a girl and *Fangirl* from that of a boy. These two literary works complement each other and will lead to interesting discussions. Both were well-received by critics around the world.

Hayley Severson, Lena Wilson and Q Adams will serve as moderators for this group.
In 1854, Victorian London experienced its most devastating cholera outbreak to date. As the death toll increased, fear gripped the residents of London as the cause of the disease remained unknown. Before Louis Pasteur’s development of the germ theory of disease and in the face of established scientific and governmental skepticism, anesthesiologist John Snow began a groundbreaking investigation into the cause of the outbreak — one that would establish modern epidemiology and change public health forever.

The Ghost Map places the reader within the context of Victorian London to draw parallels between conceptions of epidemics pre-Pasteur and epidemics today, especially with regard to social inequality.

Michael Grassi will serve as moderator for this group.

David Foster Wallace is likely best known either for his penchant for wearing head bandanas or for writing Infinite Jest. That book’s titular reference to the unbounded is a nod to its many Hamlet references, while the book itself is anything but compact; Everything and More discusses set theory instead of Shakespeare and steers clear of hundred-page descriptions of tennis games.

Though it may not be as (in)famous as IJ (or completely mathematically sound), Everything and More is DFW’s attempt to historicize every Calc 1 student’s least-favorite symbol with the tongue-in-cheek perspicacity we already expect of him.

Cait Walsh will serve as moderator for this group.

Every historical era has its prophets and critics; George Packer takes on both roles in The Unwinding, where he combines journalistic insight with Tolstoyan lyricism to produce a view of American society as we know it today: economically hamstrung, morally deconstructed and richly diverse. Packer chronicles the lives of a beltway lobbyist, a Southern biodiesel entrepreneur and a Rust Belt survivor to examine what wealth, poverty, hope and despair mean in post-recession America. His pages hum with intensely human depictions, be they of the well-known nouveau riche (Peter Thiel) or unsung families devastated by the housing market collapse (the Hartzells of Tampa, Florida). Most recalling of John Dos Passos’s U.S.A. trilogy, The Unwinding has earned universal praise in critical and academic circles, winning the National Book Award in 2013.

Daniel Meschter will serve as moderator for this group.
**CAT'S EYE**
by Margaret Atwood

Mondays 4:30 to 5:20
180 David L. Boren Hall
9 to 10 weeks

*Cat’s Eye* is written through flashbacks, and it explores adolescence, feminism and art movements in the mid-20th century. Its discussion of the construction of identity both relates to readers and particularizes the ironies of growing up and becoming a functioning person. One of Margaret Atwood’s most well-known novels, *Cat’s Eye* explores a multitude of relevant issues.

Amanda Ahadizadeh and Alice Barrett will serve as moderators for this group.

**FRESH FRUIT, BROKEN BODIES: MIGRANT FARMWORKERS IN THE UNITED STATES**
by Seth Holmes

Fridays 12:30 to 1:20
182 David L. Boren Hall
6+ weeks

*Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies* was written by Seth Holmes while pursuing his MD to show how anti-immigration sentiment, a broken food system and racism undermine health and healthcare. Holmes takes a hands-on approach, personally crossing the border with immigrants, staying with them in both Oaxaca and in labor camps and working alongside them picking tomatoes, strawberries and corn. He follows them to hospitals and clinics to provide a personal view of the symbolic violence and prejudices which normalize racism, negatively affecting the everyday lives of the people who pick the food on our plates.

Kathryn Shauberger and Lucy Mahaffey will serve as moderators for this group, which may also view documentaries on the food industry.

**WHITE TEETH**
by Zadie Smith

Tuesdays 6:00 to 6:50
182 David L. Boren Hall
9 to 10 weeks

Zadie Smith got her first book deal when she was 22, and she published *White Teeth* at 25. It examines contemporary London through the eyes of Archie Jones and Samad Iqbal, war veterans and unlikely friends. As Smith describes the story of their friendship, their families and their lives in London, we see many themes emerge, including race/ethnicity and legacy.

Smith also addresses the “cultural mixing pot” London has become along with the disasters that occur in the lives of the characters, the expectations they have for themselves and the humor that presents itself in life.

Holly Holmaas and Margaret Clark will serve as moderators for this group.
People tend to find comfort in the belief that humans are inherently good, capable of making rational decisions and maintaining a moral code. However, the truth about our morality may not be quite so comfortable.

In an in-depth examination of human nature, renowned psychologist Philip Zimbardo reveals that the line between good and evil is disturbingly easy to cross. Using his infamous Stanford Prison Experiment as evidence, Zimbardo explores the psychology of evil and our susceptibility to it, forcing readers to question what it truly means to be evil.

Jacqueline Nugent and Valerie Zike will serve as moderators for this group.

The main goal of the group will be to examine the philosophies Island contains. It takes a primarily utilitarian standpoint; therefore the group will look at the efficacy of that moral theory — and what other theories may have led to better outcomes.

Cooper Williams and Samuel York will serve as moderators for this group.
Both the longest and, according to the New York Times, the most accessible of Pynchon’s bibliography, Against the Day tangles genres, characters, themes and everyone’s favorite — spontaneous song, to span history from the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair to the end of World War I. The novel combines classic Pynchon convolutions with the tradition of the historical novel, relating the narratives of an array of characters from historical nobodies to famous faces like Nikola Tesla and Groucho Marx.

Comparable to the postmodern pinnacle of Joyce’s Ulysses, Against the Day is a rewarding story of epic scale and complexity sure to engross the fastidious reader and thrill the cursory one.

Jackson Haffener and Sarah Smith will serve as moderators for this group.

In this autobiographical novel, Pineau explores her childhood search for a cultural identity. Born in Paris but of Guadeloupean origin, she is not “French” enough for her peers. However, as her parents have purged themselves of their Caribbean culture in order to better, she is also cut off from her Guadeloupean family who see her as too cosmopolitan. She finds solace when her grandmother, Julia, comes to live with her to escape her abusive husband and becomes a wellspring of cultural knowledge, enabling young Pineau to find where she belongs. L’exil selon Julia is a humorous and lucid exploration of societal racism and the difficulties of being of mixed cultural origin.

Laura Pearson will serve as moderator for this group, which will be read in French.

Your $4 Big Mac costing $11? No, it’s not some dystopian universe, it’s the reality if you subtract subsidies and add in all of the external costs of meat production. A compelling exposé into the hidden costs of the animal food industry, David Simon’s Meatonomics explores the hidden costs of the meat and dairy industry, from public health to climate change to cruelty. While calculating full costs is economically impossible, the relatively conservative attempt provides a unique critique of the connections between government and agricultural interests. Furthermore, problems are not simply identified; solutions are proposed, making for lively discussion of the rigged economics of meat.

Jeremy Allen will serve as moderator for this group.
Brazilians initially celebrated when they learned they would be hosting the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. Since then, however, they have taken to the streets in massive numbers, protesting the rampant corruption and destruction of neighborhoods that has come from these games. Brazil’s Dance with the Devil explores this collision of sports and politics and the implications it has for Brazil and the world.

Many people have studied the impacts of Mexican immigrants on the United States’ culture and economy, yet few have seriously considered the influence that the U.S. has on Mexico. Examining issues ranging from rising obesity to recreational drug use to the rise of Walmart, In the Shadow of the Giant explores the ongoing Americanization of our southern neighbor.

Students with an interest in studying abroad in OU’s new centers in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil or Puebla, Mexico are particularly encouraged to join this group, but all are welcome.

Jaci Gandenberger will serve as moderator for this group.

What Science Offers the Humanities examines some of the deep problems facing current approaches to the study of culture. Edward Slingerland argues that in order for the humanities to progress, its scholars need to take seriously contributions from the natural sciences — and particular research on human cognition — which demonstrate that any separation of the mind and the body is entirely untenable. The author provides suggestions for how humanists might begin to utilize these scientific discoveries without conceding that science has the last word on morality, religion, art, and literature.

Featuring 39 essential essays by pioneering scholars, scientists and critics, Evolution, Literature, and Film opens with an introduction to the principles of evolution, with essays from Charles Darwin on the logic of natural selection, Richard Dawkins on the genetic revolution of modern evolutionary theory, Edward O. Wilson on the unity of knowledge, Steven Pinker on the transformation of psychology into an explanatory science and David Sloan Wilson on the integration of evolutionary theory into cultural critique. Each essay explains the contribution of evolution to a study of the human mind, human behavior, culture, and art.

KC Poe will serve as moderator for this group.
| **THE SANDMAN**  
VOLS. 1 AND 2  
by Neil Gaiman |
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| Fridays 2:30 to 3:20  
217 Cate Center 1  
10+ weeks |

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| **THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER**  
by Carson McCullers |
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| Fridays 1:30 to 2:20  
217 Cate Center 1  
7 to 8 weeks |

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| **NAIL IT THEN SCALE IT**  
by Nathan Furr and Paul Ahlstrom |
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| Mondays 6:00 to 6:50  
182 David L. Boren Hall  
5 to 6 weeks |

Described by Norman Mailer as “a comic strip for intellectuals,” *The Sandman* is a story about stories and decisions. Over its life, the comic transitions from dark horror at the beginning to an elaborate fantasy filled with classical and contemporary mythology.

Benji Burnett and Dakotah Rainwater will serve as moderators for this group.

*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, Carson McCullers’ debut novel, has been heralded as a hallmark of 20th-century American literature. Despite being written when McCullers was only 23, this novel strikes upon the loneliness of the human condition and the isolated struggles of the spirit.

Widely regarded as remarkable for its portrayal of race relations in the antebellum south, McCullers masterfully examines what it means to be southern and poor. The themes presented in this masterpiece remain poignant and relevant today, making this classic novel well worth reading.

Bryce Hermsen and Nathan Edmonson will serve as moderators for this group.

Paul Ahlstrom and Nathan Furr have spent their entire lives immersed in the startup world — one as an academic, the other as a serial founder and investor. *In Nail It Then Scale It*, they detail the process that forms the basis of all successful startups.

The strategies they give for nailing ideas, products, and marketing form a handbook for entrepreneurs. For those interested in starting a company, *Nail It Then Scale It* is not only useful; it is necessary.

Jeffery Terry will serve as moderator for this group.
Dave Eggers’ *The Circle* is science fiction that offers a dystopian—or possibly utopian depending on one’s perspective—vision of the present. Eggers tells the story of Mae, a new employee at The Circle, a fictional Silicon Valley tech company that resembles a combination of Microsoft, Google and Facebook.

Eggers’ novel explores the relationship between technology, social media, surveillance, politics, privacy and capitalism; two of the fictional company’s slogans are “secrets are lies” and “privacy is theft.” In *The Circle*, Eggers uses a fast-paced, plot-driven story to raise some very interesting and complex questions that should make for great discussion.

Prof. Daniel Mains will serve as moderator for this group.

How might a legal system work without government? This book looks at how the voluntary organization of individuals might be enough to build a system of law without a state. David Friedman, economist and legal scholar, addresses unusual and challenging problems alike, from privatization of law to public goods provision.

Through historical examples of healthy societies without government, the economics of law and empirical comparisons of private and publically provided goods, Friedman presents a case for anarchy, specifically building his case on the beneficial consequences of a decentralized legal order.

Wade Craig and Adrienne DePrisco will serve as moderators for this group.

Malcolm X’s autobiography is a riveting tale of his ascension from hustling in the streets of New York to becoming an international icon as a minister in the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X had an unwavering honesty about systemic racism, and his leadership created a wave of Islamic spirituality that swept through Black America in the 1950s and ’60s. The Nation of Islam is a legacy of black power, an interesting alternative to Christianity, and a source of deep controversy.

Amid growing friction between African-Americans and a system of justice that still disproportionately takes black lives, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is a much-needed examination of black history. All readers, regardless of color, will learn about the systemic plights and alternative perspectives which make up Black America.

Lester Asamoah will serve as moderator for this group.
**THE PHILIP K. DICK COLLECTION [continued]**

*Wednesdays, 12:30 to 1:20
217 Cate Center 1
15 weeks*

This reading group will discuss four novels from the second and third volumes of the Philip K. Dick Collection — *VALIS, A Scanner Darkly, Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* and *Martian Time-Slip*. These works contain many of the themes that make Dick’s science fiction so iconic: plots that artfully toy with reality, what it means to be human and the effects of the inevitable passage of time.

In addition, to read anything by Philip K. Dick is to enjoy unprecedented access into one of the strangest, most interesting literary minds of the 20th century. Many of his novels are heavily autobiographical and could only have been written by someone with his unique combination of brilliance, mental instability and substance abuse. For that and many other reasons they are to be treasured.

Prof. David Ray and Walter Bezanson will serve as moderators for this group.

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**GRASSHOPPER JUNGLE**

*by Andrew Smith*

*Tuesdays, 5:30 to 6:20
214 Cate Center 1
8 to 9 weeks*

When a mysterious mold comes into contact with his best friend Robbie’s blood, 16-year-old Andrew Szerba must face the prospect that he has helped bring about the end of the world. Together with Robbie and his girlfriend Shan, Andrew finds himself battling the mantis-like creations of a Cold War mad scientist, to a soundtrack of Rolling Stones hits and the screams of terrified Iowans. While Andrew tackles the apocalypse, though, the self-described obsessive historian also works to come to terms with his identity as a Polish-American teenager in the Midwest who might be in love with both his girlfriend and his best friend at the same time.

In *Grasshopper Jungle*, author Andrew Smith combines the pop-nihilism of *True Detective* and the kitsch of 1960s B-movies with modern queer theory and a close analysis of how heritage defines identity, and in doing so provides readers with insight into what it means to grow up in America in early 21st century.

Ivana Jaworski and Adam Curry will serve as moderators for this group.
THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES
by Che Guevara &
CHE GUEVARA: A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE by Jon Lee Anderson

Mondays 12:00 to 12:50
201 Cate Center 1
10 to 12 weeks

According to Fidel Castro, “he was the Revolution.” According to the CIA, he was “fairly intellectual for a Latino.” In this reading group, we’ll try to get to the bottom of the romanticized, controversial and relevant figure of Ernesto “Che” Guevara through both biography and his own words.

The Motorcycle Diaries is Che’s personal account of his journey of self-discovery through the various unequal worlds of Latin America. Che: A Revolutionary Life has been recognized as a definitive source on Che’s times and his present-day perception, and this year World Literature Today ranked it as one of their top 10 "Books That Inspired the World, 1989-2014."

Arthur Dixon will serve as moderator for this group.

INTO THE WILD by Jon Krakauer &
THE WILD TRUTH by Carine McCandless

Wednesdays 5:30 to 6:20
214 Cate Center 1
15 weeks

In 1992, a young man named Christopher McCandless cut off communications with his friends and family, gave away his college fund and traveled across the United States, eventually embarking on a solo journey into the Alaskan wilderness. After over 100 days of surviving on his own, McCandless was eventually found dead for unclear reasons.

Into the Wild is Jon Krakauer's seminal investigation into McCandless’s odyssey. Besides examining the story of a uniquely compelling and idiosyncratic individual, Krakauer's account also raises questions of identity and belonging that resonate today. In addition, this group will read The Wild Truth by Carine McCandless, Christopher McCandless’s sister. The Wild Truth is McCandless’s account of the siblings' turbulent home life growing up, providing new context for understanding the events of Into the Wild.

Will Goree and Charles Mogen will serve as moderators for this group.
**Jesus' Son** by Denis Johnson  
*Fridays 2:00 to 2:50*  
182 David L. Boren Hall  
3 weeks

*Jesus' Son* is not for the faint of heart. Called an earthquake in American short fiction and among the finest literature of the quarter-century, this book will claw out your eyes and slurp up your guts. It is an uncompromising portrayal of life in 1970s America, narrated by a possibly brain-damaged and certainly drug-addled man who stumbles just nearly endearingly enough through eleven interdependent stories for your jaw to be hanging on at the end. By a thread. Oh, and the title is from that one Velvet Underground song Lou Reed wrote about heroin.

NOTE: this book contains content that some may find offensive.

Justin Mai will serve as moderator for this group.

**Four Books On**  
**THE LGBT EXPERIENCE:**  
**1957-2007**  
*Wednesdays 4:30 to 5:20*  
217 Cate Center 1  
15 weeks

*Remembering Denny*, by talented American writer Calvin Trillin, is his effort to understand a college classmate from Yale, who had seemed like the All-American “golden boy” with unlimited potential for success. Only after the classmate commits suicide at age 55 does Trillin realize he was a closeted gay man who was unable to come to terms with his sexual orientation.

*Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* is the story of the writer Paul Monette, who establishes a wonderful long-term relationship with a loving partner, only to succumb to the AIDS epidemic in its early and most virulent phase.

*Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, is the autobiography of Audre Lorde, the late Caribbean-American lesbian essayist, poet, theorist and activist. This book dramatically documents Lorde’s life as a Black working-class lesbian in New York City, and provides an invaluable historical perspective on gay urban identity in the era before Stonewall. This book is a hallmark of American gay literature, as well as an important American autobiography.

*Fun Home* is a memoir by lesbian cartoonist Alison Bechdel, which was named the Best Book of the Year by *TIME* magazine in 2006. It uses the graphic novel form to tell the story of her childhood and her coming-out process in college. There, she explores her nascent lesbian identity by reading classic works of English literature, which also prompt her to confront a family secret: her father’s life as a closeted gay man.

Prof. Julia Ehrhardt and Prof. David Ray will serve as moderators 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.