Informal Reading Groups
Spring Semester 2014

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 20-24 (with three exceptions) and will meet from 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 after January 6th to HonorsReading@ou.edu. Groups are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, so it is helpful to indicate a second choice.
IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES: The Civil War in the Heart of America 1859-1863

Wednesdays 1:30-2:20
DLBH 182
Nine Weeks

Winner of the prestigious Bancroft Prize, this highly original account of the outbreak and early years of the Civil War focuses on the ground-level experience of ordinary people in two nearby counties — one in Pennsylvania and one in Virginia, through their letters, diaries, newspapers.

Connected by strong ties of every kind, including the tendrils of slavery, the people of this borderland sought alternatives to secession and war. When none remained, they took up war with startling intensity. As historian Edward Ayers relays with a vivid immediacy, it came to their doorsteps in hunger, disease, and measureless death.

The author is scheduled to be one of the guest speakers at this spring’s university-wide Teach-In.

Moderator: Prof. David Ray

THE BROTHERS: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War

Fridays 9:30-10:20
DLBH 182
Seven Weeks

During the 1950s, when the Cold War was at its peak, two immensely powerful brothers led the United States into a series of foreign adventures whose effects are still shaking the world. John Foster Dulles was secretary of state while his brother, Allen Dulles, was director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

In this book, Stephen Kinzer places their extraordinary lives against the background of American culture and history. Propelled by a quintessentially American set of fears and delusions, the Dulles brothers launched violent campaigns against foreign leaders they saw as threats to the United States. These campaigns helped push countries from Guatemala to the Congo into long spirals of violence, led the United States into the Vietnam War, and laid the foundation for decades of hostility between the United States and countries from Cuba to Iran.

Moderator: Prof. David Ray

Cambridge Opera Handbook - Mozart's COSI FAN TUTTE

Wednesdays 3:30-4:20
DLBH 182
Four Weeks (begins February 19th)

The spring production of OU’s Opera Theatre program will be COSI FAN TUTTE, with performances March 6th-9th.

At once the most light-hearted and most disturbing of Mozart’s Italian comic operas, COSI FAN TUTTE has provoked widely differing reactions from listeners for more than two centuries.

This reading group will read and discuss essays about the opera, leading to a closer understanding of the work, and providing a detailed account of the libretto’s complex origins in myth and Italian literary classics. The Cambridge University Handbook also reveals surprising new information on the role played by Mozart’s rival Salieri, and contains a full synopsis plus performance history.

Members of the group will have the opportunity to attend the opera together.

Moderator: Prof. David Ray
My Own Country: A Doctor's Story - A young Indian doctor in rural Tennessee during the AIDS epidemic

Fridays 10:30-11:20
DLBH 182
Nine Weeks

Nestled in the Smoky Mountains of eastern Tennessee, the town of Johnson City had always seemed exempt from the anxieties of modern American life. But when the local hospital treated its first AIDS patient, a crisis that had once seemed an “urban problem” had arrived in the town to stay. Working in Johnson City was Abraham Verghese, a young Indian doctor specializing in infectious diseases. He became by necessity the local AIDS expert, soon besieged by a shocking number of male and female patients whose stories came to occupy his mind, and even take over his life. Dr. Verghese brought a singular perspective to Johnson City: as a doctor unique in his abilities; as an outsider who could talk to people suspicious of local practitioners; above all, as a writer of grace and compassion who saw that what was happening in this conservative community was both a medical and a spiritual emergency. Out of his experience comes a startling but ultimately uplifting portrait of the American heartland as it confronts—and surmounts—its deepest prejudices and fears.

Moderator: Prof. David Ray

Smartest Kids in the World and How They Got That Way - American students confront schools in South Korea, Finland, and Poland

Tuesdays 4:30-5:20
DLBH 182
Five Weeks

In her highly acclaimed new book, Amanda Ripley tells the story of three American students, each studying abroad for a year. Kim, a restless 15-year-old from rural Oklahoma, heads off to Finland, a place she had only read about, “a snow-castle country with white nights and strong coffee.” Instead, what she finds is a trudge through the cold dark, to a dingy school with desks in rows and an old-fashioned chalkboard — not an iPad or interactive whiteboard in sight. A Minnesota teenager named Eric reports “The kids in South Korea acted like they lived in the classroom because they essentially did. They spent more than twelve hours there every weekday.” The most consistent difference Ripley discovers is the way of selecting and training teachers.

Moderators: Dean Gregg Garn of the College of Education and Dean David Ray

Manning Marable's Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention - Winner of the Pulitzer Prize

Wednesdays 2:30-3:20
DLBH 182
Eleven Weeks

Twenty years in the writing and winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize, this new biography will surely be definitive, but it has also provoked controversy. One reviewer called it “absorbing and well-written, passionate but painstakingly evenhanded” in its portrayal of a figure who was evolving when he was cut down by assassins at age 39. Most importantly, the late Manning Marable gives Malcolm the scholarly, almost Shakespearean consideration that’s long overdue.

Like all good biographies, this means getting behind the myths both good and bad — the stalwart black Muslim warrior who sacrificed himself for his people, and the raging anti-white demagogue. One of the many achievements of this biography is that Mr. Marable manages to situate Malcolm X within the context of 20th-century racial politics in America without losing focus on his central character.

Moderator: Prof. David Ray
MOBY-DICK
Herman Melville

Tuesdays 10:30-11:20
CCD1 201
Twelve Weeks

Moby Dick is now considered one of the greatest novels in the English language and has secured Melville's place among America's greatest writers. Written in 1851, it is the story of Ishmael's whaling voyage and an eerily compelling madman pursuing an unholy war against a creature as vast, dangerous, and unknowable as the sea itself.

Moderator: Bryce Hermsen and Zainab Shakir

THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS
Albert Camus

Mondays 11:30-12:20
CCD1 214
Five Weeks

How does one reason with the realization of the meaninglessness and absurdity of life? Camus answers this question by following the Greek figure Sisyphus and relating his love for life, hatred of death, and ceaseless, pointless chore of carrying a boulder up a mountain as a metaphor for modern life. The toil of Sisyphus allows Camus to analyze suicide as a potential response towards the realization of absurdity.

Camus fills in the thoughts of Sisyphus as he begins to acknowledge the futility he has been condemned to play out. Sisyphus has been taken to represent many different aspects of our society and Camus gives us the answers for dealing with the realizations of the absurd.

Moderator: Zach Eldredge

HEART OF DARKNESS
Joseph Conrad

Mondays 11:30-12:20
CCD1 214
Three Weeks (begins February 24th)

Echoing themes explored in Kipling’s “white man’s burden”, Conrad’s short novel, Heart of Darkness, traces protagonist Marlow’s journey deeper and deeper into an unnamed area of Africa as he becomes obsessed with locating the enigmatic and charismatic Kurtz. Kurtz has become a demi-god among the natives near his ivory trade route; his transformation parallels Marlow’s as he delves into the darkness around him and the darkness within himself.

On the surface, it is about a human’s darker self, and what makes a person civilized or savage; underneath, it is a complex analysis of the impacts of European imperialism, colonialism, and racism on Africa, and an exploration of the corruption and exploitation that builds civilizations.

Moderator: Zach Eldredge
THE BORDER TRILOGY
Cormac McCarthy

Wednesdays 12:30-1:20
CCD1 214
Fifteen Weeks

Cormac McCarthy is one of the giants of modern American literature. In what the New York Times Book Review calls “A miracle in prose, an American original,” The Border Trilogy is the account of two young men coming of age in the violent, and violently changing, border region between the US and Mexico. In All the Pretty Horses, The Crossing, and Cities of the Plain, McCarthy, in his trademark Faulkner-esque prose, presents a hauntingly beautiful, humorous, and sorrowful elegy for the American Frontier.

Moderator: William Lonn

LITTLE WOMEN
Louisa May Alcott

Thursdays 3:30-4:20
CCD1 214
Twelve Weeks

Louisa May Alcott’s semi-biographical novel, Little Women, recalls the lives of four little girls - Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy - as they develop into women. Originally published in 1868, the Little Women books were a break from novels traditionally aimed at girls and serves as the basis for what would become the “American Girl” genre. Alcott focused on the themes of domesticity, work, and true love, providing a framework for individuality in female literature that was sorely underrepresented in the 19th century. Little Women remains important today because of the challenging role it played in the nascent stage of the women’s rights movement.

Moderators: Christine Elliott and Alexandra Smith

THE HOUSE OF GOD
Samuel Shem

Wednesdays 3:30-4:20
CCD1 214
Eight Weeks

The House of God is a gripping journey into the lives of Roy Basch and five of his fellow interns at the most renowned teaching hospital in the country. Dr. Basch and his irreverent confident, known only as the Fat Man, will learn not only how to be fine doctors but, eventually, good human beings.

Samuel Shem has created an unaltered, unglorified, and forthright portrayal of the caring, pain, pathos, and tragedy felt by all who spend their lives treating patients, working at the crossroads between science and humanity.

Moderators: Reece Miller and Linh Nguyen
THE CRYING OF LOT 49
Thomas Pynchon

Fridays 11:30-12:20
CCD1 214
Five Weeks

Not sacrificing any form for function, Thomas Pynchon’s satirical short novel is an expertly crafted story that combines witty wordplay with unconventional characters to create what could either be a perfect example of postmodernism or a clever parody of postmodernist devices.

The Crying of Lot 49 is a story about Oedipa Maas, who finds herself wrapped up in a global conspiracy that stretches through both geography and history, as she meets many tragi-comic figures along the way and discovers secrets about competing mail distribution companies and even about herself. Lest the page length deceive you, the book is not short on big ideas; themes of alienation, identity, surveillance and paranoia are lurking throughout the labyrinthine plot where cultural references and semiotic experiments also live.

Moderator: Dr. Ben Alpers

THE RADICANT
Nicolas Bourriaud & ART POWER
Boris Groys & WEB AESTHETICS
Vito Campanelli

Fridays 1:30-2:20
CCD1 217
Fourteen Weeks

This reading group will be exploring issues and ideas relevant to contemporary art theory and practice. What sets contemporary art apart from that art that was considered to be post-modern, and where can this art stand in relation to politics and technology?

The Radicant by Nicolas Bourriaud proposes an “altermodernity” characterized by an art practice focused on translation, motion, wandering, exchange, and precarity, all in implicit opposition to the harmful effects of globalization.

Art Power by Boris Groys explores the tactics available to art that operates within the political/ideological sphere, outlining the history of such practices and offering a contemporary theory of the paradoxical power of the image.

Web Aesthetics by Vito Campanelli is an appraisal of the aesthetics of social networks, file sharing, and digital remix culture. He proposes a uniting of communication towards an idea of aesthetics against utilitarianism and the commercial interests embedded in the Internet.

Moderators: Dillon Votaw and Ben Clark
From sectarian violence in Syria to Washington gridlock, the world is full of Us vs. Them conflicts at varying levels of enormity. Joshua Greene, like everyone else, recognizes this problem of group solidarity and exclusion; however, in Moral Tribes, he also offers a solution.

Synthesizing neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy, the director of Harvard’s Moral Cognition Lab outlines how our brain works on different levels of instinct and moral consideration. This disparity results in a multi-leveled conflict between our emotions for “me and mine” and our desire to act morally. Greene proposes a balance between instincts and reason through a set of pragmatic maxims to facilitate cooperation with Them. Moral Tribes is simultaneously entertaining and theoretically, as well as practically, informative.

Moderator: Alyssa Boutelle
The first part of Orwell’s text is an exploration of the bleak and desolate conditions of workers in northern industrial England and ultimately serves as anecdotal evidence for the dire necessity of socialism in the context of pre-WWII antagonisms; the second part is about the development of Orwell’s political consciousness and his attempt to strip away the nonsense surrounding socialism that turn many away. Criticizing the alleged inaccessibility and pretentiousness that surround socialism, Orwell provides a logical and human argument that is neither too coldly calculated nor too sentimental.

*The Road to Wigan Pier* is a non-fiction account of poverty which provides a truly human exploration of economic forces and how they affect society, while maintaining a genuine concern for the well-being of the often stigmatized and marginalized working poor. Controversial? Undoubtedly. Compelling and convincing? That’s for the reader to decide.

Moderator: Will Stringer

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In *The Ancestor’s Tale*, Dawkins takes the reader on an exhilarating reverse tour through evolution, a pilgrimage from present day humans back to the microbial beginnings of life four billion years ago.

Written in a similar fashion to Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, as the narrative progresses the reader joins chimpanzees, gibbons, and other pilgrims travelling to the first primordial organism. Along the way are forty rendezvous points, each introducing a common ancestor and a new member of the pilgrimage. Throughout the journey, Dawkins spins insightful stories and sheds light on topics such as speciation, sexual selection, and extinction.

Moderators: Walter Bezanson, Luis Molina, Kevin Peterek

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A frightening and powerful tale of the loss of freedom and identity in a chillingly believable totalitarian world, *V for Vendetta* stands as one of the highest achievements of the graphic novel medium. Furthermore, the novel is a defining work for its writer Alan Moore, author of *Watchmen* and frequently described as the best graphic novel writer in history.

David Lloyd’s illustration in cinematic chiaroscuro set the novel apart from its genre and V’s Guy Fawkes-inspired appearance has transcended Lloyd’s artwork and has made its way into the real world, frequently being used in demonstrations against the perceived injustices of governments, financial institutions and other powerful organizations.

Moderator: Garrett Hicks
**READY PLAYER ONE**
Ernest Cline

*Thursdays 2:30-3:20*
CCD1 217
Eight Weeks

It’s 2044 and humanity utilizes an ultimate form of escapism, the OASIS, to hide from the world’s bleak surroundings. Once you’re jacked into the OASIS you experience a virtual utopia of ten thousand planets where you can be anything you desire.

Hidden within the virtual world is massive fortune protected by a series of intricate puzzles comprised of the riddles of OASIS creator James Halliday. Wade Watts stumbles upon the first puzzle; thousands of competitors join and are willing to murder others in their path for power and wealth. For Wade to complete the puzzle and survive he must leave behind the utopia of the OASIS and experience life, love, and the real world that humanity wishes to escape.

Moderator: Whitney Thompson

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**In conjunction with the Arabic Flagship Program: A READER OF MODERN ARABIC SHORT STORIES**

*Tuesdays 4:30-5:20*
Second Wind Coffee Shop
Seven Weeks

Designed for the English-speaking student, “A Reader of Modern Arabic Short Stories” by Sabry Hafez and Catherine Cobham brings together the Arabic texts of 11 modern Arabic short stories. Each is preceded by an introduction in English, containing biographical information about the author and a critical analysis of the story. These stories are written by authors from all over the Arab World, including Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Palestine, and more.

Moderator: Genevieve Schmitt

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**ENDER'S GAME**
Orson Scott Card

*Tuesdays 4:30-5:20*
CCD1 214
Seven Weeks

This highly lauded science fiction novel follows Ender Wiggin, a child genius recruited to attend Battle School, a military academy for the most brilliant minds on Earth. There he trains to command a fleet against the genocidal alien species that nearly annihilated the human race in a previous invasion.

The author seamlessly augments the engaging plot with striking insights into human nature as Ender must compete with his peers while rapidly advancing through training. Winner of the Hugo and Nebula awards for Best Novel, and recommended reading for the U.S. Marine Corps, *Ender’s Game* delves into the psychology of war, leadership, and conflict.

Moderator: James Icenogle and Derrick Jones
**RETURNING TO EARTH**  
Jim Harrison  

**Wednesdays 1:30-2:20**  
CCD 1 217  
Six Weeks  

Donald is a middle-aged Chippewa-Finnish man slowly dying of Lou Gehrig’s disease. His condition deteriorating, he realizes no one will be able to pass on to his children their family history once he is gone. He begins dictating to his wife, Cynthia, stories he has never shared with anyone—as around him, his family struggles to lay him to rest with the same dignity with which he has lived. Over the course of the year following Donald’s death, his daughter begins studying Chippewa ideas of death for clues about her father’s religion, while Cynthia, bereft of the family she created to escape the malevolent influence of her own father, finds that redeeming the past is not a lost cause.

In the universally-praised *Returning to Earth*, Jim Harrison has delivered a masterpiece—a tender, profound, and magnificent novel about life, death, and the possibility of finding redemption in unlikely places. *Returning to Earth* is a deeply moving book about origins and endings, making sense of loss, and living with honor for the dead. It is among the finest novels of Harrison’s long, storied career, and confirms his standing as one of the most important American writers now working.

**ECONOMICS IN ONE LESSON**  
Henry Hazlitt  

This group will be scheduled democratically using doodle.com  
Four Weeks  

Hazlitt has been credited by many economic commentators to have foreseen the collapse of the global economy which occurred 50 years after the publication of *Economics in One Lesson*. Hazlitt has a focus on non-governmental solutions, strong anti-deficit leanings, and emphasis on the free market.

This million copy seller, *Economics in One Lesson*, written in 1946 may be dated but is still considered an important primer for modern economics.

If you are interested please send an email to honorsreading@ou.edu with “SCHEDULE HAZLITT” in the subject of the email.

Moderator: Neal Walia

**EXXON:**  
*Transforming Energy 1973-2005*  
Joseph Pratt  

**Fridays 10:30-11:20**  
CCD 1 217  
Twelve Weeks  

ExxonMobil has remained among the most profitable concerns in the history of modern capitalism by showing flexibility when faced with the need to adapt to changing conditions. As the company responded to sweeping changes in global markets, its decisions reflected a deeply held corporate culture that rested on the key operating values of engineering efficiency and financial discipline.

This extensively researched volume demonstrates how Exxon’s core values and management enabled the company to adapt and succeed during a period of dramatic changes for the energy industry. Pratt and Hale provide readers a historical perspective from inside one of the most powerful corporations in the world.

Moderator: Dr. Robert Lifset
In *Eating Animals*, Jonathan Safran Foer, the critically acclaimed author of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and *Everything Is Illuminated*, turns his pen to non-fiction to take on the institutions of meat consumption and factory farming. Through an examination of foreign and domestic commercial farming and fishing, Foer explains the effects of eating animals on both humans and the animals we eat. From living conditions that facilitate the exponential spread of swine fly to slaughter techniques that make salmonella and campylobacter infections almost ubiquitous in the chicken we eat, our relationship with the animals we consume remains largely unexamined and potentially dangerous.

*Eating Animals* pressures its readers to be more thoughtful of the dietary decisions we make and prescribes humane agriculture techniques as solutions to the problems raised throughout the book.

Moderator: Lauren Abston

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**CRÓNICA DE UNA MUERTE ANUNCIADA**  
Gabriel García Márquez

**Tuesdays 3:30-4:20**  
CCD1 217  
*Six Weeks*

NOTE: This group will read the Spanish-language edition and will be conducted in Spanish.

Gabriel García Márquez has won both the Neustadt International Prize for Literature as well as the Nobel Prize in Literature and is considered among the most influential writers of the 20th Century. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is the non-linear, pseudo-journalistic account of the investigation into the death of Santiago Nasar. Just hours after marrying the beautiful Angela Vicario, everyone agrees, Bayardo San Roman returned his bride in disgrace to her parents. Her distraught family forced her to name her first lover; and her twin brothers announced their intention to murder Santiago Nasar for dishonoring their sister. Yet if everyone knew the murder was going to happen, why did no one intervene to stop it? The more that is learned, the less is understood, and as the story races to its inexplicable conclusion, an entire society - not just a pair of murderers - is put on trial.

Moderator: Laura Figueroa

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**THE CLOSING OF THE AMERICAN MIND**  
Allan Bloom

**Mondays 2:30-3:20**  
DLBH 182  
*Eight Weeks*

Attempting to assert that the crisis of our contemporary society is an intellectual one, Bloom explores how and in what ways higher education has “failed democracy”. Central to his thesis is the concept of the student’s mind being closed off and the soul being robbed by a corrupt curriculum that emphasizes an embrace of the status quo and refuses to instill a longing for change, for openness, and for challenging everything taken for granted in students.

Exploring social views of education, philosophical ruminations over pedagogy, and an analysis of the genealogy of education, Western thought, and knowledge, Bloom critiques consumerism and the emphasis on earning a degree for money rather than for learning. Any student concerned about the modern state of higher education or the future of education in general should read this book.

Moderator: Dr. Vicki Schaeffer
MÉMOIRES D’HADRIEN
Marguerite Yourcenar

Wednesdays 10:30-11:20
CCD1 214
Nine Weeks

NOTE: This group will read the French edition and the discussion will take place largely in French.

The modern French classic originally published in 1951, Mémories d’Hadrien, is the fictional autobiography of Emperor Hadrian, the first century Roman emperor who rebuilt the Pantheon. Composed as a letter to his cousin, Marcus Aurelius, Mémories d’Hadrien contains the emperor’s accounts of military victories, poetry and music, philosophy, and his passion for his lover Antinous.

Although the historical Hadrian wrote his own autobiography, it has been lost and Marguerite Yourcenar gifts the world with a beautiful account of what could have been. Yourcenar, noting a similarity to post-war Europe, inspects Hadrian’s unique place in history between the end of traditional Roman mythology and the beginning of Christianity.

Moderators: Elizabeth Hurd and Laura Pearson

I AM A STRANGE LOOP
Douglas Hofstadter

Tuesdays 1:30-2:20
CCD1 217
Nine Weeks

What is I? A self, soul, consciousness, what do we mean when we say I?

The search for the soul and the question of what the self is has been endless both in philosophy and science. Much of neuroscience looks to the small particles, a soup of reactions and energy but on a higher level there is a compilation of abstractions which Hofstadter calls ‘symbols’, the most complex symbol being the I.

In this reading group we will study and discuss Hofstadter’s work, I Am a Strange Loop, written in 2007 as a reworking of his ideas in his most famous work Gödel Escher Bach published in 1979. As in GEB, the book is filled with dialogue and mental puzzles, but he has added reflections and memories from his own life. With these additions we are not only given the theories but their weight and application, illustrated by a man who has dedicated his life to spinning the strange loop back in upon itself.

Moderators: Katie Shauberger and Jackson Haeffner

THE PENGUIN ANTHOLOGY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN POETRY

Rita Dove, Pulitzer Prize winner and former Poet Laureate of the United States, introduces readers to the most significant and compelling poems of the past hundred years in “The Penguin Anthology of Twentieth-Century American Poetry.” This volume represents the full spectrum of aesthetic sensibilities—with varying styles, voices, themes, and cultures—while balancing important poems with vital periods of each poet.

Featuring earlier works by Robert Frost, James Weldon Johnson, and Wallace Stevens along with examples from the new generation of critically acclaimed poets, including A. E. Stallings, Terrance Hayes, and Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey, Dove’s selections paint a dynamic and cohesive portrait of modern American poetry.

Moderator: Sarah Smith
If philosophy is concerned with living the good life, Practical Ethics by Peter Singer is a how-to. Singer writes on the moral dilemmas of everyday life and examines how we should decide them. He deals with questions that confront us as concerned citizens: equality and discrimination on the grounds of race or sex; abortion, the use of embryos for research, and euthanasia; political violence and terrorism; and the preservation of our planet’s environment.

This book’s lucid style and provocative arguments make it an ideal text for lively discussions and for anyone willing to think about how she or he ought to live.

Moderator: Storm Dowd-Lukesh

LOLITA & AN INVITATION TO A BEHEADING
Vladimir Nabokov & A CLOCKWORK ORANGE
Anthony Burgess

Responsibility for spawning one of the most well-known cultural figures - Humbert Humbert - as well as introducing the word “Lolita” into our cultural lexicon to mean a sexually precocious, usually younger, girl, Nabokov’s Lolita features a controversial love story between an older professor and a 12-year-old girl, Dolores Haze. Known for his witty wordplay, use of unreliable narrators, and unconventional narrative structure, Nabokov had written something that would be the subject of much criticism, much discussion, and a lot of censorship. Nabokov attempts to give Humbert the chance to describe his misery and malaise with sincerity; much is told through fragmented memories, making the novel similar to a hazy dream, and through its unconventional form it challenges not only our perceptions of reality but also our most complex notions of what is right and what is wrong. After finishing Lolita this group will go on to read An Invitation to a Beheading by Nabokov and A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess.

Moderator: Alex Aria

PERDIDO STREET STATION
China Mièville

Mondays 3:30-4:20
CCD1 214
Fourteen Weeks

Multidimensional beings. Corrupt politicians. Artificial intelligence. Those taking up residence in the oppressive police state of New Crobuzon must face the harsh reality of the violent, urban landscape that utilizes a brutal militia and surveillance culture to instill perpetual fear in its citizens. An experiment in world-building, humans and non-humans co-exist in Bas-Lag where a scientist is asked to restore the flight of a bird-man. Things go completely awry when the scientist unintentionally helps stimulate the metamorphosis of a species of caterpillar, that feeds off of hallucinogenic drugs and grows into parasitic monstrosities.

Combining an early industrial capitalist setting with the presence of magic and steampunk technology, Mièville’s work merges fantasy, speculative fiction, and noir in a genre-defying book that embraces the New Weird literary movement.

Moderator: Tyler Tennant

PRACTICAL ETHICS
Peter Singer

Mondays 1:30-2:20
CCD1 217
Eight Weeks

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PRACTICAL ETHICS
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Mondays 1:30-2:20
CCD1 217
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Moderator: Storm Dowd-Lukesh
Malcolm Gladwell's
DAVID AND GOLIATH: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants
Fridays 2:30-3:20
CCD1 214
Six Weeks

In the tradition of Malcolm Gladwell's previous bestsellers (The Tipping Point, Blink, Outliers and What the Dog Saw), David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants draws upon history, psychology, and powerful storytelling to reshape the way we think of the world around us. David and Goliath is a penetrating refutation of preconceived notions about adversity, privilege, and how the disadvantaged succeed. Gladwell begins with the real story of what happened between the giant and the shepherd boy those many years ago. From there, the book examines Northern Ireland's Troubles, the minds of cancer researchers and civil rights leaders, murder and the high costs of revenge, and the dynamics of successful and unsuccessful classrooms - all to demonstrate how much of what is beautiful and important in the world arises from what looks like suffering and adversity.

Moderator: Molly Oberstein-Allen and Sarah Hurd

THE CALL OF CTHULHU AND OTHER WEIRD STORIES
H.P. Lovecraft
Mondays 3:00-3:50
CCD1 217
Eight Weeks

H.P. Lovecraft is widely considered one of the most influential and celebrated figures of 20th century horror and science fiction.

This collection of short stories includes some of his most celebrated works including “The Call of Cthulhu”, “The Haunter of the Dark”, and “Beyond the Wall of Sleep”.

Known for portraying mankind as insignificant in a universe filled with madness and horror, Lovecraft has crafted a truly masterful work of science fiction.

Moderators: Jacob Mitchell & Patrick Richardson

THE ISLE OF YOUTH
Laura van den Berg

Wednesdays 4:30-5:20
CCD1 214
Five Weeks

Laura van den Berg's second book is a collection of multi-faceted stories that begins with a plane carrying honeymooners plummeting towards the earth. The crash sets the tone for the rest of the book: characters struggling to understand the world around them see their efforts constantly thwarted as they plummet back down to their own realities. Themes of anxiety, doubt, choice, and identity all breathe life into these pages about enigmatic and secretive women, including a private eye, a magician’s assistant, and gangsters.

Combining a sense of mystery and wonder with realism and empathetic characters, van den Berg gives us a book with people trying to discover the secrets of their own inner worlds.

Moderator: Morgan Brokop
The Stranger follows a young Algerian pied-noir, Meursault, who has just received news of his mother’s death. Throughout the funeral Meursault feels no pain, grief, or regret; he feels only the physical inconvenience of sitting through the vigil in the heat of the sun. Camus follows Meursault’s thoughts as he begins to question the irrationality of the world. The thoughts influence Meursault and allow Camus to express absurdist themes, such as alienation, and question the importance of the physical versus the emotional. The novel is short yet rich with philosophical commentary; it would take an analysis at least as long as the novel itself to fully capture the meaning of Camus’ The Stranger.

After completing The Stranger, this group will read Journey to the End of the Night, by Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Céline’s debut novel is a nihilistic, misanthropic analogue to On The Road. Journey to the End of the Night recounts the improbable yet convincingly described travels of the semi-autobiographical petit-bourgeois antihero, Bardamu, from the trenches of World War I, to the African jungle, to New York and Detroit, and finally to life as a failed doctor in Paris.

Moderator: Justine Alexander and Daniel Grimmer


**CASINO ROYALE & LIVE AND LET DIE**  
Ian Fleming  

*Tuesdays 12:30-1:20*  
*CCD1 214*  
*Eight Weeks*

*Casino Royale*, the first of Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels, begins with a fifty-million-franc game of baccarat as 007, member of the secret service, pursues his target, Le Chiffre, a French communist and member of SMERSH a Soviet murder organization. Follow Bond in his inaugural assignment made up of murder, love, and sadistic torture.

*Live and Let Die* depicts Bond’s interactions with SMERSH after the events of *Casino Royale*. Bond’s target is Mr. Big, SMERSH operative, criminal, master of fear, and Voodoo Baron of Death. Watch as Bond’s mission becomes entangled with superstition, manipulation and, as always, romance.

**LOOKING FOR ALASKA & THE FAULT IN OUR STARS**  
John Green  

*Tuesdays 4:30-5:20*  
*CCD1 217*  
*Eleven Weeks*

While the young adult genre often equates to career suicide for serious writers, John Green embraces it. John Green is a Youtube sensation and founder of Nerdfighteria, a wide-reaching group of fans of and participants in John and his brother Hank’s many projects - their joint vlog, Hank’s science vlog, John’s history vlog, Hank’s music.

Near the center of this nerd-embracing culture are John Green’s novels, especially *Looking for Alaska* and *The Fault in Our Stars*. These books, written for a YA audience, deal with the ageless struggles of love, death, and survival. In *Looking for Alaska*, Miles Halter, who is obsessed with famous last words, attempts to inject excitement in his life by enrolling in boarding school, where he meets the ceaselessly exciting Alaska Young. Miles proceeds to get lost in her and then attempts to find her.

*The Fault in Our Stars* is the account of Hazel Lancaster and Augustus Waters. These two teen cancer survivors learn to accept their bodies’ flaws, each other’s flaws, and the flaws of destiny.

**Moderator: Lillian Flannigan**
This group will read the standout debut novels of two young authors: Tom Rachman’s *The Imperfectionists* and Kristopher Jansma’s *The Unchangeable Spots of Leopards*. *The Imperfectionists* follows the story of the staff at an English-language paper in beautiful Rome. As print media crumbles, so do the lives of the reporters, editors, and executives of the newspaper. As the imperfect journalists discover and recover their own lives, they also find the truth behind their paper’s own history and its enigmatic founder.

*The Unchangeable Spots of Leopards*, published three years later, appears on many “If you liked Rachman, you’ll like ...” lists because of a similar backdrop of writers. As Rachman deals with journalists, Jansma writes about a novelist trying to tell the truth through stories while similarly figuring out the truth about his own life. Rachman and Jansma are some of the best new writers in America and their pleasant novels deserve serious consideration.

Moderator: Stephanie Allred

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**THE IMPERFECTIONISTS**  
**Tom Rachman &**  
**THE UNCHANGEABLE SPOTS ON LEOPARDS**  
**Kristopher Jansma**

*Twelve Weeks*

This group will read the standout debut novels of two young authors: Tom Rachman’s *The Imperfectionists* and Kristopher Jansma’s *The Unchangeable Spots of Leopards*. *The Imperfectionists* follows the story of the staff at an English-language paper in beautiful Rome. As print media crumbles, so do the lives of the reporters, editors, and executives of the newspaper. As the imperfect journalists discover and recover their own lives, they also find the truth behind their paper’s own history and its enigmatic founder.

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**MARY**  
**and**  
**SPEAK, MEMORY**  
**Vladimir Nabokov**

*Thirteen Weeks*

Vladimir Nabokov is considered among the best writers in both Russian and English. In fact, two of his novels were ranked in the Modern Library’s 100 Best Novels (*Lolita* at 4th, and *Pale Fire* at 53rd). Ranked 8th in the corresponding list for nonfiction, *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov’s memoir covering his pre-American life, is praised for its convergence of fact and fiction in writing one’s own biography. In addition to *Lolita, Speak, Memory*, and *Mary*, this group will read a number of Nabokov’s work in order to truly appreciate the descriptive detail and intricate wordplay that define his work.

*If you are interested, please send an email to honorsreading@ou.edu with “SCHEDULE NABOKOV” in the subject of the email.*

Moderator: Luis Molina
First published thirty years ago, but only now available in English, this short book is highly contemporary and relevant, as the present-day Egyptian government continues to act much as its earlier incarnation does in the book.

The story is set around -- and marked by -- the war of 1967 and everything that went with it in Egypt. At a Cairo café in the 1960s, a legendary former belly dancer lovingly presides over a boisterous family of regulars, including a group of idealistic university students. One day, amid reports of a wave of arrests, three of the students disappear. When they return months later, they are apparently unharmed and yet subtly and profoundly changed. It is only years later, after their lives have been further shattered, that the narrator pieces together the young people’s horrific stories and learns how the government used them against one another. In a riveting final chapter, their torturer himself enters the Café and sits among his former victims, claiming a right to join their society of the disillusioned.

Kafka may be the most influential twentieth-century fiction writer; his realistic fantasies of urban angst anticipated the predicament of the modern-to-postmodern citizen. Kafkasque: the very word evokes tortuous bureaucracy and crushing self-doubt. After Kafka, it can be said, literature was not the same.

Although numerous biographers have guided readers on a journey through Kafka’s labyrinthine life and writings, celebrated novelist Louis Begley allows Kafka to speak in his own words as much as possible, weaving selections from letters, journals, novels and stories into a biographical narrative. Kafka wrote: “The tremendous world I have inside my head. But how [to] free myself and free it without being torn to pieces. And a thousand times [I’d] rather be torn to pieces than retain it in me or bury it. That, indeed, is why I am here, that is quite clear to me.”

Moderator: Prof. David Ray

KARNAK CAFÈ - 
Recently translated novella by Egyptian Nobel Prize-winner Naguib Mahfouz

Wednesdays 3:30-4:20
DLBH 182
Four Weeks

THE TREMENDOUS WORLD I HAVE INSIDE MY HEAD
Franz Kafka: A Biographical Essay

Mondays 11:30-12:20
DLBH 182
Five Weeks

THE GIVER
Lois Lowry

Thursdays 4:30-5:20
DLBH 182
Four Weeks

Every aspect of society has been carefully selected, including the career of each citizen. Jonas is selected to inherit the position of “Receiver of Memory,” the person who stores all the past memories of the time before Sameness, in case they are ever needed to aid in decisions that others lack the experience to make.

As Jonas receives the memories from the Giver, he discovers the power of knowledge. The people in his community are happy because they do not know of a better life, and the knowledge of what they are missing out on could create major chaos. He faces a dilemma: should he stay with the community and the safe, consistent but shallow life it offers, or should he run away in pursuit of a life full of love, color, choices, and knowledge, but also potentially full of danger?

Moderator: Dakotah Rainwater

Moderator: Prof. David Ray
Anton Chekov’s elegiac last play
THE CHERRY ORCHARD

Wednesdays 3:30-4:20
DLBH 182
Three Weeks (begins March 19th)

This spring, OU’s University Theatre program will present Anton Chekhov’s THE CHERRY ORCHARD on April 4th-13th.

Written in 1904, Chekhov was insistent about calling his elegiac last play a comedy, and that classification has kept scholars in agitated argument for more than a century.

The play concerns an aristocratic Russian woman and her family as they return to their family estate (which includes a large and well-known cherry orchard) just before it is auctioned to pay the mortgage. While presented with options to save the estate, the family essentially does nothing and the play ends with the sale of the estate to the son of a former serf; the family leaves to the sound of the cherry orchard being cut down. The story presents themes of cultural futility – both the futile attempts of the aristocracy to maintain its status and of the bourgeoisie to find meaning in its newfound materialism. This group will read and discuss the play, and then members of the group will have the opportunity to attend a performance of the play together.

Moderator: Prof. David Ray

COTTON TENANTS:
Three Families - Recently discovered masterpiece by James Agee

Mondays 10:30-11:20
DLBH 182
Five Weeks

In 1941, James Agee and Walker Evans published Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, a four-hundred-page book about three tenant farming families in Alabama at the height of the Great Depression. The book shattered journalistic and literary conventions. The origins of this collaboration date back to an assignment for Fortune magazine, which sent Agee and Evans to Alabama in the summer of 1936 to report a story that was never published. Some have assumed that Fortune’s editors shelved the story because of the unconventional style that marked Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, and for years the original report was lost. Now, fifty years after Agee’s death, a trove of his manuscripts turned out to include a typescript labeled “Cotton Tenants.” Once examined, the pages made it clear that Agee had in fact written a masterly, 30,000-word report for Fortune.

Published for the first time in 2013, and accompanied by thirty of Walker Evans’s historic photos, Cotton Tenants is an eloquent report of three families struggling through desperate times. Agee’s dispatch is one of the most honest explorations of poverty in America ever attempted.

Moderator: Prof. David Ray

WAR AND PEACE
Leo Tolstoy

Fridays 2:30-3:20
DLBH 182
Sixteen Weeks

Regarded by many as the greatest novel ever written, War and Peace describes in graphic detail events and battles during the French invasion of Russia, and the impact of the Napoleonic era on Tsarist society, as seen through the eyes of five Russian families.

Written over five years and published in 1869, the novel opens in the year 1805 during the reign of Tsar Alexander I and leads up to the 1812 French invasion. The group will read a newly revised version of the definitive translation by Louise and Aylmer Maude whose translation was the one approved by Tolstoy himself.

Moderators: Michael Reynolds and Laura Kincade
**ANABASIS**

**Xenophon**

*Fridays 1:30-2:20  
CCD1 214  
Five Weeks*

*Anabasis* is a true tale of dangerous adventure in ancient Greece. Though advised not to join the army of 10,000 by his friend Socrates, Xenophon does set out with Cyrus the Great in his attempt to gain the empire of Persia from his brother. When this leader is killed in battle, however, the army loses cause and direction, and the result is a ‘marching republic’ in which the remainder of the army must fight their own way home. Through endless miles of hostile territory where their foes crop up at every turn, Xenophon emerges as one of the few men capable of making decisions and leading the army through a variety of difficulties in a perilous retreat back to Greece. When at last they reach the sea and know they near their homeland, their cries of fierce joy resound and become legendary.

Told in forthright and unpretentious prose, this epic journey of extraordinary endurance over hardship remains an entertaining account that exemplifies Socratic philosophy, clear Greek writing, and the by-gone valor of remarkable warriors.

Moderator: Benjamin Acker

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**ON THE GENEALOGY OF MORALS**

**Friedrich Nietzsche**

*Mondays 1:30-2:20  
DLBH 182  
Five Weeks*

Always controversial, always disquieting, always challenging, but always rewarding - Nietzsche’s work is dense but worth the effort; he expands on ideas formulated in previous works and explores the very sources of our own moral prejudices. Understanding and stressing his own historical context and the role of violence in the history and development of ethics, Nietzsche explores the difference between “good/evil” and “good/bad”, the concept of slave morality and the role of ethics as they relate to the marginalized, the presence of guilt, conscience and memory in morality, and what ascetic ideals are.

Considered to be one of his most important works, if not the most important work, Nietzsche traces the development and interpretation of some of our most basic assumptions, challenging most of what we might otherwise take for granted. Read it and you might never be the same again.

Moderator: Dr. Rich Hamerla

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**Gail Dines'  
PORNLAND: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality**

&

**THE TROUBLE WITH NORMAL**

**Michael Warner**

*Mondays 7:00-7:50 (PM)  
DLBH 182  
Five Weeks*

What was the most continuous reading group in Honors College history is back after a brief hiatus. The Feminist Reading Group, which met over a period of several years and included both faculty members and students, makes its triumphant return with Gail Dines’ *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*. The book investigates porn’s power to desensitize and actually limit our sexual freedom by examining how today’s porn became more hard-core, violent, sexist, and racist than ever. Dines argues that the ubiquitousness of pornography is a public health concern we can no longer ignore.

The group will select additional books with social justice themes to read after completing *Pornland*.

Moderator: Dr. Julia Ehrhardt
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.