Informal Reading Groups
Fall 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 August 25th and will meet for 3 to 18 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 Wednesday, August 13th to HonorsReading@ou.edu. Groups are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, so it is helpful to indicate a second choice.
A MATHEMATICIAN’S LAMENT by Paul Lockhart

Mondays 1:30 to 2:20
214 Cate Center 1
2 weeks

How School Cheats Us Out of Our Most Fascinating and Imaginative Art Form

A Mathematician’s Lament is Paul Lockhart’s contribution to the growing body of literature regarding America’s failed efforts to educate its children in mathematics. Having been both a professional mathematician and a teacher, Lockhart has a unique and incisive perspective on what is being done wrong and why.

Written whimsically but with forceful arguments, Lament represents a plea for more rational and effective teaching tools and styles in the classroom – ones based not upon memorization and rigid lessons, but rather upon puzzles, free-form creativity and problem solving. If you are hard-pressed to imagine creativity and, well, fun mixing with the math you learned (or are still learning!) in school, Lockhart’s reasoning is very much worth considering.

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

PATRIOT OF PERSIA by Christopher de Bellaigue

Wednesdays 2:30 to 3:20
217 Cate Center 1
6 to 8 weeks

Muhammad Mossadegh and a Tragic Anglo-American Coup

Iran’s Muhammad Mossadegh, the democratically elected prime minister overthrown by US and British agents in 1953, was a man who declined a salary, returned gifts and collected tax arrears from his beloved mother. This aristocrat enraged the West by insisting that Iran, not Britain, should own, sell and profit from Iranian oil. In this new biography, Christopher de Bellaigue, Tehran correspondent for The Economist, sympathizes with Mossadegh in his attempt to bring democracy to Iran but does not let him off the hook for its failure. The book presents a nuanced portrait of an enigmatic man whose brilliance and fair-mindedness fatally collided with his pride and rigidity. It also provides context for the dismal state of U.S.-Iran relations today.

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

FLASH BOYS by Michael Lewis

Fridays 12:00 to 12:50
217 Cate Center 1
5 to 7 weeks

Flash Boys: A Wall Street Revolt, written by former Salomon Brothers employee and bestselling author Michael Lewis, details the sudden, insidious inundation of the financial markets with shadowy middlemen known as “high-frequency traders.” Lewis, who has previously written several books on finance, brings detailed knowledge of stocks, stockbrokers and the massive institutions that control them to bear on the subject. Flash Boys follows the story of the creation of IEX, an alternative stock exchange designed to thwart the techniques of high-frequency traders.

This reading group looks to discuss the impact of technology on the financial industry and touch on Lewis’ major theme – that as computing speed, dark pools and programming expertise become the norm on Wall Street, a populace that has billions of dollars invested in the stock market is beginning to lose sight of where its money is and how it is being used.

Prof. David Ray and Walter Bezanion will serve as moderators for this group.
This group will be scheduled by online Doodle poll

Wednesdays 4:30 to 5:20
214 Cate Center 1
13 to 15 weeks

What are the grand dynamics that drive the accumulation and distribution of capital? This question lies at the heart of political economy, but satisfactory answers have been hard to find for lack of adequate data and clear guiding theories.

In Capital in the Twenty-First Century, Thomas Piketty presents ideas that have transformed the debate and set the agenda for the next generation of thought about wealth and inequality. Piketty demonstrates that, while we have avoided inequalities on the apocalyptic scale predicted by Karl Marx, the underlying structures of capital are nonetheless faulty.

A work of extraordinary ambition, originality and rigor, Capital in the Twenty-First Century reorients our understanding of economic history and confronts us with sobering lessons for today.

Kevin Hadley will serve as moderator for this group.

Science Fiction? Alternate-history? Mystery/Noir/Thriller? The City and The City, China Miéville’s 2009 novel, is all of these and more. Inspector Borlu must investigate the murder of a foreign student Mahalia Geary, but in order to do so he must make the dangerous journey from his hometown of Beszel to the hostile environment of its “twin city,” Ul Qoma. Things get strange very quickly as Borlu confronts the seeming impossibility of the two cities both occupying the same geographic coordinates. The City and the City explores the tensions which arise when competing and antithetical ideologies are at odds with one another, and in so doing cuts to the very dark heart of humanity, posing challenging philosophical questions within the confines of a thrilling narrative.

Dr. Brian Johnson will serve as moderator for this group.

MAN, ECONOMY, AND STATE
by Murray N. Rothbard

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.

CAPITAL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
by Thomas Piketty

Wednesdays 11:30 to 12:20
217 Cate Center 1
6 to 8 weeks

THE CITY & THE CITY
by China Miéville

Kevin Hadley will serve as moderator for this group.
Euripides was one of the most significant and influential tragedians of ancient Greece, along with contemporaries Sophocles and Aeschylus. His works have had an immense impact on drama. Considered “the most tragic of poets,” Euripides creates heroes out of common people in extreme situations. Reading these plays will give us an insight into ancient Greek culture, as Euripides’ characters and search for remnants of this ancient culture in today’s society.

Kristin Black and Lindsay Floyd will serve as moderators for this group.
THE BRIEF AND WONDERFUL LIFE OF OSCAR WAO & THIS IS HOW YOU LOSE HER
by Junot Díaz

Mondays 12:30 to 1:20
214 Cate Center 1
10 to 12 weeks

Junot Díaz’s first novel, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, was named “#1 Fiction Book of the Year” by Time and earned Diaz the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2008, establishing itself as a modern classic. While encapsulating Dominican-American history, the book chronicles both the life of Oscar Wao, an overweight Dominican boy growing up in Paterson, New Jersey who is obsessed with science fiction and fantasy novels and with falling in love, as well as the curse that has plagued his family for generations.

This is How You Lose Her, Diaz’s acclaimed collection of short stories, revolves around the haunting, impossible power of love. At the heart of these stories is the irrepresible, irresistible Yunior, a young hardhead whose longing for love is equaled only by his recklessness—and by the extraordinary women he loves and loses. In prose that is endlessly energetic, inventive, tender, and funny, the stories in this New York Times Best Seller lay bare the infinite longing and inevitable weakness of the human heart.

Stephanie Allred will serve as moderator for this group.

EAST OF EDEN
by John Steinbeck

Tuesdays 3:00 to 3:50
217 Cate Center 1
11 to 13 weeks

Set in the rich farmland of California’s Salinas Valley, this sprawling and often brutal novel follows the intertwined destinies of two families — the Trasks and the Hamiltons — whose generations helplessly reenact the fall of Adam and Eve and the poisonous rivalry of Cain and Abel.

In East of Eden, Steinbeck created some of his most memorable characters and explored his most enduring themes: the mystery of identity, the inexplicability of love, and the murderous consequences of love’s absence.

Considered one of the greatest American novels, and indeed one of the greatest novels of any stripe, Steinbeck’s magnum opus examines the outer extremes of insidious hatred and betrayal — and the bitter consequences thereof.

Christine Elliot will serve as moderator for this group.
One of our greatest living scientists presents us with a work of brilliance and ambition whose central argument is both groundbreaking and as old as the Enlightenment. Biologist Edward O. Wilson believes that all knowledge is intrinsically unified, and that behind disciplines as diverse as physics, biology, anthropology and the arts lie a small number of natural laws. "Consilience" is what Wilson calls the interlocking of these laws.

Using the natural sciences as his model, Wilson forges dramatic links between fields. He explores the chemistry of the mind and the genetic bases of culture. He postulates the biological principles underlying works of art ranging from cave-drawings to Lolita. Synthesizing Wilson’s latest findings in prose of wonderful clarity and eloquence, Consilience is science in the path-clearing tradition of Newton, Einstein and Feynman.

Taylor Hamstra and KC Poe will serve as moderators for this group.

Ender’s Shadow is a “parallel novel” to the critically-acclaimed work of science fiction, Ender’s Game. While it helps to have read the latter, the novels can be enjoyed in either order. If you enjoyed Ender’s Game, the parallel sequel will provide an exhilarating and unique read based on a perspective shift.

After devastating invasions by the sentient, insect-like “Formics,” humankind takes desperate, ethically-questionable measures to survive. These include the training of a group of exceptional young children in Battle School, a space station where students learn military tactics and leadership. Ender’s Shadow centers around Bean, the brightest trainee at Battle School, who will eventually become Ender Wiggin’s crucial second in command for the war with the Formics.

Potential discussion points include the ethics of war, literary perspective and the meaning of consciousness.

Typ Whinnery will serve as moderator for this group.
Albert Camus (1913-1960) was a French author and journalist and one of the key philosophers of the 20th century. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. Published in 1946, this novel is Camus’ compelling and troubling tale of a disaffected, apparently amoral young man. It has earned extraordinary popularity in part because it reveals so vividly the anxieties of its time: alienation, the fear of anonymity and spiritual doubt. The plot is simple. A young Algerian, Mersault, afflicted with a sort of aimless inertia, becomes embroiled in the petty intrigues of a local pimp and, somewhat inexplicably, ends up killing a man. Once he’s imprisoned and eventually brought to trial, it becomes apparent that his crime is not so much the arguably defensible murder he has committed as it is his deficient character.

Nicole Smith will serve as moderator for this group.

Meditations is one of the last works of the stoic philosophers. Written by the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, it catalogues many of his private ideas, opinions and recollections. Famed as one of the greatest Roman emperors, Aurelius was an able administrator, statesman, soldier and philosopher in equal measure. He was primarily an advocate of stoicism, which taught both moderation and inner calm through times of both triumph and calamity, and the humble acceptance of events outside of man’s control.

Though broken into short chapters, Meditations’ brevity doesn’t sacrifice any depth of thought. Its rich pieces chronicle Aurelius’ methodology in applying stoicism to his life. Practical and readable, they lack the abstraction sometimes found in philosophical works and have persisted through the centuries as masterpieces of thought.

Benjamin Acker will serve as moderator for this group.

The Chilean poet and author Roberto Bolaño (1953-2003) was a towering presence in the Spanish-language literature of the late twentieth century. Bolaño began his career as a leftist activist and a literary enfant terrible known for his poetry. He is now almost a cult figure, most renowned for his fiction, which treats the jarring and violent experiences of his Latin-American contemporaries with dark humor, complex symbolism and deep ambiguity. This novel is a 130-page rant -- part confession, part justification, part delirium -- by a dying man, Father Sebastian Urrutia. He tells a disjointed story of his young literary ambitions and what he did to pursue them. After the violent military coup of 1973, he gives a weekly seminar for the generals, and attends a literary salon given by a woman who worked for the secret police and whose house was used for interrogations.

Prof. David Ray will serve as moderator for this group.
The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2013 is a lively, entertaining collection of the year's best fiction, nonfiction, poetry, comics and other illuminating inducements. Compiled by Dave Eggers and high school students from around the country, this well-received annual promises the offbeat, quirky, cynical or just plain uproarious viewpoint that's been missing from your classroom. Wide-ranging and thought-provoking, the collection delivers a kaleidoscopic view of the issues and intrigues that visit many of the so-called “Millennial Generation,” while also managing solid reportage on such incidents as the Best American Term Paper Assignment, the Best American Poem about a Particle Accelerator and the Best American Apocryphal Discussion Between Our Nation’s Founding Fathers (all real features contained within the 2013 edition).

Justin Mai will serve as moderator for this group.

As part of a supposedly self-obsessed, apolitical, layabout, consumeristic generation, no one can write more truthfully about being a twentiesomething in this time than twentiesomethings themselves. This anthology is a poignant discussion of 21st century youth written by millennials themselves and collected by Random House. In what began as an essay-writing competition and ended as a brutally honest reflection on what it means to be young today, the meditations cover subjects ranging from higher education to minimum wage jobs, from feeling like a child to having a child, from financial chaos to lack of finances, from romance to loneliness. Composed of individual essays revolving around a common theme, Twentysomething Essays by Twentysomething Writers offers the perfect starting point for a discussion about the growth of our generation.

Sarah Miles and Jesse Coker will serve as moderators for this group.

One of the most celebrated authors of the past 20 years, David Foster Wallace left an indelible impression on the American literary culture. His idiosyncratic, deftly crafted prose, vivid, off-the-wall imagination and thoroughly empathetic analytical eye set him apart as one of the most influential writers in modern American fiction and nonfiction.

In Consider the Lobster, a collection of his essays, Wallace covers a variety of different topics such as ghostwritten sports autobiographies, a Maine lobster festival, an adult film convention and John McCain’s 2000 presidential primary campaign, all with vibrant curiosity, resonant analysis and often a great deal of humor.

Charles Mogen and William Goree will serve as moderators for this group.
As financial institutions, corporations and the stock market insert themselves ever more into the daily lives of Americans, it is vital that we undergo a parallel increase in our understanding of these phenomena. In *Managed by the Markets*, Gerald Davis sketches a history of business in America, its trends and what we can expect in the future – including the rise of global corporations that rival governments in size and power.

Among other subjects, Davis explains in detail the worrying intermingling of commercial and investment banks and the changes in American law that have impacted corporations and mergers, all with an eye toward the culminating influences these had on the financial crash of 2007.

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

Hailed by George R.R. Martin as “a bright new voice in the fantasy genre,” Scott Lynch captivates his audience with this thrilling tale of adventure, loss and revenge. Situated in the “Venice-esque” medieval city of Camorr, the novel quickly immerses its readers in the complex underworld that controls much of the city. Led by Capa Barsavi and working under the Secret Peace, the thieves of Camorr carve out for themselves a decent existence. However, Locke Lamora’s greedy nature has him and his gang disregarding the established rules by designing elaborate schemes to dupe the nobility of Camorr, despite the risk of punishment from the Capa. All the while, the mysterious Gray King lurks in the shadows as a constant threat to not only Locke’s gang but also the peace of the entire city. Locke must use his quick wits, ordinarily reserved for grand heists, just to ensure his survival.

Stephen Lindstrom and Aubrey Haverkamp will serve as moderators for this group.

*Noli Me Tangere* is a story of corruption that explores the turpitude of the Catholic Church in the midst of the Philippine Revolution. A tale of forbidden romance and false accusation, this sharply crafted book is sure to spark an intriguing dialogue of faith and society.

José Rizal, a polyglot of over 13 languages, wrote a book to spur on a revolution in which he was fated to die. His work is now required reading in all Philippine schools and considered one of the finest works of Spanish-language literature. Come read and discuss with us the excellent Augenbraum English translation.

Cooper Williams will serve as moderator for this group.
A TALE FOR THE TIME BEING
by Ruth Ozeki

Wednesdays 5:30 to 6:20
217 Cate Center 1
7 to 9 weeks

Award-winning novelist, filmmaker and ordained Zen Buddhist priest Ruth Ozeki’s remarkable Booker Prize shortlisted third novel, *A Tale for the Time Being*, addresses with beauty and compassion the harsh realities of modern existence. Ozeki writes through the twinned narratives of Nao, a Japanese schoolgirl recently uprooted from her family’s home in Silicon Valley after the dot-com bubble of the 1990s, and Ruth, a Japanese-American writer who discovers Nao’s diary over a decade after it was written. Across years and generational gaps, communicating with each other exclusively through the words of Nao’s diary, these women face everything from small-town gossip to extensive cyberbullying. *A Tale for the Time Being* deals with Zen Buddhism’s philosophy of passivity toward the violence manifest in the planet’s very workings, and the ways in which we shape our stories and those of the violent world in which we live.

Ivana Jaworski will serve as moderator for this group.

THE FOUNTAINHEAD
by Ayn Rand

This group will be scheduled by online Doodle poll

Mondays 5:00 to 5:50
217 Cate Center 1
3 to 5 weeks

Illustrating her unique philosophy of objectivism, Russian-born novelist-philosopher Ayn Rand demonstrates the importance of individuality and reason in her first widely successful novel: *The Fountainhead*. Throughout the novel, protagonist Howard Roark chooses to remain true to his singular conception of architecture at the cost of success and fame. Despite the growing trend amongst competitors to borrow from the great architectural styles of ancient history to please public demand, Roark refuses to compromise his vision. Instead, he challenges himself to continuously create innovative, uncorrupted designs.

The *Fountainhead* offers the reader a glimpse into Rand’s philosophical system through themes of independence, self-reliance and the individual’s duty to himself. More than 6.5 million copies have been sold worldwide, and it was the book that first sparked Rand’s popularity — which has helped her to remain a popular figure to this day.

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

GRIMM’S FAIRY TALES
by Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm

Ever suspect Prince Charming was too sweet? Doubt that Rapunzel’s hair could support the body weight of a well-built man in his twenties? Ponder that seven dwarves living with a young woman was not a normal family unit? Want to know what really happened to Little Red Riding Hood?

Explore the not so happily-ever-after world of Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm’s original fairy tales, sans the Disney romanticizing. [Warm milk provided.]

Kiersten Strachen will serve as moderator for this group.
**WAKING FROM THE DREAM**
by David Chappell

*Wednesdays 4:30 to 5:20*
217 Cate Center 1
4 to 6 weeks

**The Struggle for Civil Rights in the Shadow of Martin Luther King, Jr.**

This book focuses on the years after Martin Luther King’s assassination — and provides a sweeping history of the struggle to keep the civil rights movement alive and to realize King’s vision of an equal society. OU history professor David Chappell demonstrates that, far from coming to an abrupt end with King’s murder, the civil rights movement entered a new phase. It both grew and splintered. These were years when decisive, historic victories were no longer within reach — the movement’s achievements were instead hard-won, and their meanings unsettled. Chappell, author of *A Stone of Hope*, called “one of the three or four most important books on the civil rights movement” by *The Atlantic Monthly*, will join this reading group for its last discussion.

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

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**STUPEUR ET TREMBLEMENTS**
[French]
by Amélie Nothomb

*Wednesdays 11:30 to 12:20*
201 Cate Center 1
8 to 10 weeks

**Stupeur et tremblements** is a semi-autobiographical novel by Amélie Nothomb, which won the Grand Prix du roman from l’Académie Française in 1999. It is the story of a woman, Amélie, who was born in Japan but moved to Belgium with her family when she was five. She remained so enamored with Japanese culture, however, that she returned to Japan as an adult. The novel tracks Amélie’s difficulties trying to work in the corporate world in a culture which she loves so much but does not truly understand.

Her emotional journey is especially relevant to students who have already or will study abroad, as they will experience a similar immersion into a culture they may adore but come to realize they do not fully understand.

Laura Pearson will serve as moderator for this group.

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**THE HOT ZONE**
by Richard Preston

*Wednesdays 4:30 to 5:20*
217 Cate Center 1
4 to 6 weeks

The Ebola virus kills nine out of ten of its victims so quickly and gruesomely that even biohazard experts are terrified. It is airborne, it is extremely contagious and in the winter of 1989, it seemed about to burn through the suburbs of Washington D.C.

At Fort Detrick’s USAMRIID, an Army research facility outside the nation’s capital, a SWAT team of soldiers and scientists wearing biohazard suits was organized to stop the outbreak of the exotic “hot” virus. The grim operation went on in secret for eighteen days, under unprecedented, dangerous conditions.

*The Hot Zone* tells this dramatic story, giving a hair-raising account of the appearance of rare and lethal viruses and their “crashes” into the human race. Shocking, frightening and impossible to ignore, *The Hot Zone* proves that truth really is scarier than fiction.

Avik Mukherjee will serve as moderator for this group.
THE GOOD BODY & THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES  
by Eve Ensler  
Mondays 7:00 to 7:50  
182 David L. Boren Hall  
3 to 4 weeks

The Vagina Monologues is required reading for anyone interested in contemporary feminist literature and is frequently performed on college campuses (including OU’s every February). The monologues (originally performed in 1996-7) are based on the playwright’s interviews with approximately 200 women about what they thought about their vaginas, as well as topics including sex, relationships and violence against women.

The Good Body is a follow-up to The Vagina Monologues and has to do with the rest of the female body. This collection was inspired by the playwright’s attempts to rid her stomach of flab and covers such issues as plastic surgery, botox injections, fad diets and more. Expertly dissecting the worldwide obsession that women have with their bodies, The Good Body also presents testimonials of women who have come to terms with their bodies and accept them as they are.

Taken together, these books will introduce reading group participants to one of the most creative and insightful playwrights of our time. They will also encourage participants to engage in productive dialogue about contemporary women’s issues and body politics--two topics which directly affect the lives of today’s college students.

Dr. Julia Ehrhardt will serve as moderator for this group.

THE BOOK THIEF  
by Markus Zusak &  
WAS GOD ON VACATION?  
by Jack van der Geest  
Thursdays 4:30 to 5:20  
217 Cate Center 1  
14 to 16 weeks

The Book Thief and Was God on Vacation book club hopes to introduce extensive debate on how style, narration, fiction versus nonfiction, length and a myriad of other literary elements convey the horror and triumph of various Holocaust survivors' experiences.

The Book Thief is a fictitious work by Marcus Zusak in which the Holocaust is seen through the eyes of a young, adopted girl as she comes into her womanhood. Was God on Vacation is a short book based on the life of Jack van der Geest, a Dutchman who was one of only eight people ever to escape from Buchenwald concentration camp. As the Third Reich invades his home country, van der Geest becomes more involved in the Dutch resistance to the Axis occupation.

Both books will leave many speechless, but in entirely different ways — the unity created by reading these authors in conjunction is truly stunning.

Emily Ratliff and Lauren Yeagle will serve as moderators for this group.
BETTER: A SURGEON'S NOTES ON PERFORMANCE
by Atul Gawande

Thursdays 5:00 to 5:50
101 Cate Center 1
5 to 7 weeks

Better, written by Atul Gawande, is a book about the use of three virtues to find success in medicine: diligence, doing right and ingenuity. These components are essential "for success in medicine or in any endeavor that involves risk and responsibility."

Gawande argues passionately that society needs to return to the basics of medicine. By focusing essays on individual problems — such as the importance of hand washing, the World Health Organization’s efforts to eradicate polio or the role of physicians in executions — Better teaches readers to analyze performance with humility and creativity. Although undoubtedly a great read for students interested in the medical field, Better also appeals to students of a variety of disciplines. As Pauline Chen wrote, "With this book, Gawande inspires all of us, doctor or not, to be better."

Elaine Griffeth and Asheema Pruthi will serve as moderators for this group.

ATLAS SHRUGGED
by Ayn Rand

Mondays 11:45 to 12:35
101 Cate Center 1
18 weeks

Tremendous in its scope, this novel presents an astounding panorama of human life: from the productive genius who becomes a worthless playboy to the great steel industrialist who does not know that he works for his own destruction ... from the philosopher who becomes a pirate to the composer who gives up his career on the night of his triumph ... from the woman who runs a transcontinental railroad to the lowest track worker in her Terminal tunnels.

Atlas Shrugged is a mystery, one about the murder and rebirth of man’s spirit. It is a philosophical revolution told in the form of an action thriller, a ruthlessly brilliant plot with irresistible suspense.

Laura Kincaide will serve as moderator for this group.

IT'S COMPLICATED: THE SOCIAL LIVES OF NETWORKED TEENS
by danah boyd

Fridays 10:30 to 11:20
217 Cate Center 1
5 to 7 weeks

Have you ever been scolded for using the Internet too much — or too little? Do you know anyone who fears that using Facebook and Twitter will ruin us? From 2005 to 2012, ground-breaking researcher danah boyd interviewed a diverse group of young people in an attempt to define our actual relationship with social media. It turns out, it’s complicated. When we stop focusing on what’s good or bad about teenagers’ use of social media, we start to see the more interesting stuff: the racial politics in the digital divide, the meanings of privacy and the realities of cyberbullying, to name just a few.

If you are a teenager or ever have been a teenager; if you plan to work with young people or with social media technologies; if you use or deliberately do not use social media, we want you in our reading group!

Hayley Hinsberger and Sarah Otts will serve as moderators for this group.
“Women hold up half the sky,” according to a Chinese proverb. But what about places where women are prevented from attending school, working or determining their own futures? Pulitzer Prize winners Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn travelled across Africa and Asia to interview women struggling and succeeding through such hostile circumstances. Stories include a Cambodian teenager sold into sex slavery and an illiterate Ethiopian woman who experienced devastating injuries that turned her into a “modern-day leper.” Although the stories can be distressing, they also offer hope: the Cambodian teenager escaped and now runs her own business, while the Ethiopian woman was healed and became a surgeon. Half the Sky is also full of practical ways that ordinary individuals can make a difference. To Kristof and WuDunn, lifting up women around the world is not only a moral obligation: it is also the best way to fight poverty and improve everyone’s welfare — male or female — around the world.

Jaci Gandenberger and Areebah Anwar will serve as moderators for this group.

On November 15, 1959, in the small town of Holcomb, Kansas, four members of the Clutter family were savagely murdered by blasts from a shotgun held a few inches from their face. There was no apparent motive for the crime, and there were almost no clues.

As Truman Capote reconstructs the murder and the investigation that led to the capture, trial and execution of the killers, he generates both mesmerizing suspense and astonishing empathy. In Cold Blood is a work that transcends its moment, yielding poignant insights into the nature of American violence.

Holly Holmaas and Margaret Clark will serve as moderators for this group.

Cross-dressing, gay subtext, drunken revelry and a prank gone too far — it sounds like the stuff of reality TV, but it’s all in William Shakespeare’s comedy Twelfth Night. When Viola washes up in Illyria after a shipwreck, thinking her twin brother Sebastian dead, she dresses as a eunuch for her own safety and enters the employ of Duke Orsino, with whom she falls in love. Orsino, while he takes quite an interest in his new servant “Cesario,” has been pursuing the beautiful noblewoman Olivia for ages, and she’s using every excuse she can think of to dissuade him. Olivia, in turn, promptly falls for Cesario. Add a Puritanical yet gullible house manager, a drunken uncle, Sebastian (spoiler alert, he survived the shipwreck) and the sea captain who lustaft after him, and you’ve got five acts’ worth of an identity crisis just waiting to happen.

Whitney Thompson will serve as moderator for this group.
This reading group will discuss the four novels contained in the first volume of the Philip K. Dick Collection — Ubik, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch and The Man in the High Castle (winner of the 1963 Hugo Award). 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.

Surely You’re Joking, Mr. Feynman! is a collection of anecdotes told by Richard Feynman, the physicist who won the 1965 Nobel Prize for his work in quantum electrodynamics. While growing up in the Bronx during the 1920s and ‘30s, Feynman developed an affinity for science and learning, ideals which he embraced and carried throughout his career. Feynman’s stories give insight into his fascinating life, in addition to recording his reflections on philosophy and science.

His autobiography includes anecdotes ranging from talking to prostitutes in Las Vegas about the physicist Murray Gell-Mann to playing drums in a Brazilian samba band. Not by any means a typical theoretical physicist, Feynman leaves a lasting impression about challenging conventions and preconceptions.

John Ludwig will serve as moderator for this group.
Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence?

In December 2000, the Baltimore Sun ran a small piece about Wes Moore, a local student who had just received a Rhodes Scholarship. The same paper also ran a series of articles about four young men who had allegedly killed a police officer in a spectacularly botched armed robbery. One was named Wes Moore. After Wes was convicted to a life sentence, the two struck up a correspondence based on the coincidence of their names.

In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world.
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.