



WCU English Department

Faculty Picks

Summer 2016

This annual list presents suggestions for summer enjoyment from individual faculty of the West Chester University English Department. Read, view, listen!

You can also find this list & its predecessors at http://www.wcupa.edu/academics/sch_cas.eng/facultyPicks.aspx.

WCU English Majors & Alumni Book Group

Homecoming Weekend: Saturday, October 22 from 2-4 in Philips Autograph Library

We will read Pulitzer-Prize winning novel *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen (nominated by Eleanor Shevlin).

Gripping and so beautifully written, this first novel—at once a thrilling spy story, a wry comedy, a psychological novel, and much more—has been called both a great American and a great Vietnamese novel and offers a decidedly different view of the Vietnam War.

Join us homecoming weekend for discussion & refreshments!

Acting in an Uncertain World: An Essay on Technical Democracy

Michel Callon, Pierre Lascoumes and Yannick Barthe

Recommended by Justin Rademaekers

Examines the limits of deliberative democracies in an increasingly technological society in which specialists and technocrats claim ever increasing authority in lieu of citizen engagement. The authors argue for an expansion of political institutions to include “hybrid forums” in which citizens, specialists/experts, and politicians experience collaborative knowledge making. The authors examine the success of hybrid forums through case studies of decision making on issues such as nuclear waste disposal, GMOs, and avian flu. Though at times a dense read, characters come to life in case studies of hybrid forums as we see ordinary citizens struggle for agency as decisions about their bodies and their families’ bodies are made by technocrats.

All-American Boys

Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely

Recommended by Pauline Schmidt

Told in alternating perspectives of Rashad, a young African-American male who has been beaten to a pulp by a white police officer, and Quinn, a young white male who is a witness. Throughout the narrative, they both grapple with what it means to be an ‘all-American’ boy in today’s society. An important and relevant YA novel!

American Amnesia: How the War on Government Made Us Forget What Made America Prosper

Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson

Recommended by John Ward

The title of this potentially important book, written by two highly regarded political scientists, gives a clear indication of its thesis.

Beasts of the Southern Wild (2012) and When We Were Kings (1996)

Recommended by Will Nessly

Two films—drama and documentary—that tackle blackness, social marginalization, the construction of the exotic, art, sport, and aesthetics.

The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons and an Unlikely Road to Manhood

Ta-Nehisi Coates

Recommended by Eleanor Shevlin

A compelling book that pre-dates Coates’s *Between the World and Me*, this memoir details Coates’s coming of age in 1980s and 1990s Baltimore and the instrumental role that Coates’s father, a Vietnam vet and Black Panther, played in his life.

Beowulf on the Beach: What to Love and What to Skip in Literature’s 50 Greatest Hits

Jack Murnighan

Recommended by Chuck Bauerlein

This lively discussion of 50 great books from the Western Canon may be a lit major’s dream beach read. Murnighan tends to sound a tad too irreverent and intentionally silly at times, but this tone makes the ponderous classics he’s writing about more palatable to the masses. Murnighan is a professor of medieval and renaissance literature at Duke University and his comments on such works as *The Bible*, *The Illiad*, *Don Quixote*, *Anna Karenina*, *Moby Dick*, *Ulysses* and *Remembrance of Things Past* (among others) will leave you alternately howling with mirth or yelling obscenities at the author. If you ever felt guilty about not enjoying the so-called great books, don’t sweat it. Murnighan will help you see it’s not your fault. Each entry contains a crib sheet with the following categories: the Buzz, the Best Line, What’s Sexy and What to Skip. Too funny to miss!

The Black Count: Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo

Tom Reiss

Recommended by Cheryl Wanko

Thomas-Alexandre Dumas Davy de la Pailleterie was born to a French aristocrat and an enslaved African woman. Despite his impecunious father’s selling him into slavery at one point to raise some cash, he was later brought up in his family’s privileged household, eventually rising to the rank of General in the French army. His adventures and misfortunes comment on the ambiguous location people of mixed race could occupy (given money, power, and great talent) during the latter part of the 18th century. His son Alexandre would later project some of his father’s personality and adventures onto the eponymous protagonist of *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

The Bone Clocks

David Mitchell

Recommended by Erin Hurt

This novel is one of the many dystopian novels published in recent years. I'll use Amazon's own description here, because I find it so apt: "This is a feast of a book—perhaps the author's best to date—a saga that spans decades, characters, genres, and events from Mitchell's other novels. The structure is most similar to *Cloud Atlas*, with *The Bone Clocks* pivoting around a central character: Holly Sykes. Each chapter/novella is narrated from the perspective of an intersecting character, with settings ranging from England in the 80s to the apocalyptic future. Each story could stand alone as a work of genius, as they slowly build on Holly's unwitting role in a war between two groups with psychic powers, culminating in a thrilling showdown reminiscent of the best of Stephen King. Taken together this is a hugely entertaining page-turner, an operatic fantasy, and an often heartbreaking meditation on mortality. It's not to be missed."

Bully Pulpit - "Song of the Canoe"

Kim Bridgford

The Last Night of the Earth Poems - "Bluebird"

Charles Bukowski

Words Under the Words - "Kindness"

Naomi Shihab Nye

Recommended by Mary Buckelew

Read poetry – as much as you can – under a tree, in a tree, from the tree tops: alone, together, a cappella. I've highlighted a favorite, selected poem from each collection, but treat yourself and read each collection – cover to cover; intersperse poems throughout your summer time.

The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI

Betty Medsger

Recommended by Chuck Bauerlein

Medsger's inspirational page-turner is, first and foremost, a local story with national implications about eight political activists and their heroic act of civil disobedience that helped depose FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. Medsger's narrative tracks the planning and break-in of a regional FBI headquarters in Media, Pa., on the night of March 8, 1971, the same night as the first Joe Frazier-Muhammad Ali heavyweight championship fight. Knowing the fight would be heard on TVs and radios all across the region, the eight activist-burglars staged the FBI break-in just as

the fight was starting and stole a treasure trove of classified documents that were systematically released to the press. For years afterward, they escaped a nationwide manhunt and federal prosecution for their crimes. Their identities were never known until Medsger's book was published in 2014. The documents they stole and released to the public proved what peace activists had long suspected: Hoover was using the FBI to spy on everyday Americans in violation of the U.S. Constitution, running his own shadow Bureau of Investigation. Riveting, remarkable, and ultimately one of the most patriotic books you will ever read.

The Chronicles of Carlingford (series)

Margaret Oliphant

Recommended by Robert Fletcher

For fans of the Victorian novel, especially George Eliot and Anthony Trollope, I can recommend Margaret Oliphant's *Carlingford* series. She was being rediscovered by academics while I was in graduate school, but it took a while for publishers to catch up. Individual highlights include *Miss Marjoribanks* (1865) and *Phoebe Junior* (1876). You can now find some of these novels in print, such as the Broadview Press edition of *Phoebe Junior*: <https://broadviewpress.com/product/phoebe-junior/#tab-description>.

The Code of the Woosters

P.G. Wodehouse

Recommended by Eric Dodson-Robinson

This is a comic novel chronicling the misadventures of Bertram Wooster and his valet, Jeeves, in the "sinister affair of Gussie Fink-Nottle, Madeleine Bassett, old Pop Bassett, Stiffy Byng, the Rev. H. P. ('Stinker') Pinker, the eighteenth-century cow-creamer and the small, brown, leather-covered notebook."

Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge:

The British in India

Bernard S. Cohen

Recommended by Ayan K. Gangopadhyay

This book, by now a classic, traces the colonial cartographical paraphernalia by which the British tried to make sense of the territory they just acquired, named India. By so doing, Cohen quite aptly shows how colonial forms of knowledge gradually took over what could be made knowable, visible, and articulable "about" India and its newly formed "population," "secured" as it was within a "territory."

The Crossover

Kwame Alexander

Recommended by Gabrielle Halko

Newberry-award winning verse novel about a pair of twins who are basketball prodigies. Beautiful poetry, beautiful story.

Crow Planet: Essential Wisdom from the Urban Wilderness

Lyanda Lynn Haupt

Recommended by Stacy Esch

I do love crows, and I have a few crow stories. Maybe you love crows and have a few crow stories, too? Well, *Crow Planet* is a whole book that lets us know that WE ARE NOT ALONE. This is that wildlife book that helps you develop the habits of a “naturalist” no matter what your living environment. It’s not exactly science, and it’s not just navel-gazing personal narrative. Nor is it just some random stories about crows. It’s literally all that and more. An eco-memoir, if you will.

Dark Money

Jane Mayer

Recommended by Justin Rademaekers

I haven’t read this yet, but put it on my summer list after an interesting Fresh Air interview with the author Jane Mayer (<http://n.pr/1SvVhTr>). Mayer, a journalist for The New Yorker, chronicles a secret meeting of billionaires hosted by Charles and David Koch in the wake of President Obama’s election in 2008. Mayer details that during this meeting a coordinated underground conservative media campaign was launched. The groundwork laid by this secret initiative led to the eventual Tea Party success in 2010 (which has now permeated PA politics), and is directly attributed to the obstructionist approach taken by the GOP-controlled congress since 2010. I think this work will prove interesting as evidence that with enough financing, cultural values and frameworks can be deliberately created (via radio programs, email chains, mass media) and then later activated by politicians seeking election. This skews a traditional notion of political discourse in which politicians activate an already existing (somehow independent) cultural framework, but instead political groups can actively create/invent a cultural framework that can later be activated when needed.

The Economist

London, 1843-present

Recommended by Rodney Mader

This newsmagazine enflames my curiosity weekly. Sure, it’s a magazine dedicated to free markets, but not naively so. As the link below notes, “*The Economist* considers itself the enemy of privilege, pomposity and predictability. It has ... espoused a variety of liberal causes: opposing capital punishment from its earliest days, while favouring penal reform and decolonisation, as well as—more recently—gun control and gay marriage.” But here’s what’s more: I learned about 3D printing, the analysis of large data using sonification, the book I recommended elsewhere in this list and many others, and the social history of crying, all here. And, there is almost always an obituary on the last page that makes you yearn to remember the subject, and to be remembered in such a way, even if you never ever heard of the dead person before. That’s good writing, and there is plenty of it in *The Economist*. http://www.economist.com/help/about-us#About_Economistcom

The Fisherman

Chigozie Obioma

Recommended by Eleanor Shevlin

Set in the 1990s in Nigeria, this novel spins a captivating tale of seemingly ordinary events resulting in tragedy and the dissolution of bonds among four brothers in a middle-class family; it receives its power from the ways in which it interweaves mythic, biblical, tribal and natural-world images and themes.

Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800

Sheldon Pollock

Recommended by Ayan Gangopadhyay

Continuing with the other book I recommended above, this collection of articles, rigorously edited by one of the foremost Indologists today, explores what was “lost” in terms of knowledge right before the colonial contact. What Gayatri Spivak called an “epistemological violence” vis-à-vis colonialism, as the editor points out in his Introduction to this book, these articles together trace those forms of knowledge that were afloat during those three centuries prior to the establishment and consolidation of the colonial; in other words, these articles seek to articulate those forms of knowledge that were made to go away by the colonial ones: a perfect match for the Cohen book.

Get In Trouble

Kelly Link

Recommended by Rachel Banner

The newest collection of short stories from Kelly Link. Like everything she writes, the stories are wry, lush, and deeply weird. She's a writer with a penchant for odd but incisive descriptions—one character, who has a cold, describes her head as “stuffed with boiled wool and snot”—but the lyrical and literary nature of Link's work always supplements without overwhelming the enchanting power of the stories. My favorites are “The Summer People” and “The New Boyfriend,” but they're all worth your time.

George

Alex Gino

Recommended by Pauline Schmidt

Middle school student George is born a boy and looks like a boy on the outside. On the inside, George feels like a girl. The first middle grade novel to feature a transgender character, this one should not be missed!

A God in Ruins

Kate Atkinson

Recommended by Richard Scholl

This is a very long, complex, rich, and well researched work of historical fiction. Among many topics, it provides varying and very incisive insights into specific incidents during World War II and the sensibilities of an aging person—the latter a topic of increasing importance in our society. This is not an easy read, but well worth the investment of time and focus. I gained considerable knowledge from Atkinson's tome.

H is for Hawk

Helen Macdonald

Recommended by Jen Bacon

Part memoir, part falconry lesson, this book is gorgeously written, and has the added benefit of making you crave the outdoors. You'll smell what it's like to be in the woods, and then you'll want to go there. And you'll identify with, or discover, the feeling of having an obsession. If you have experienced profound grief, this book's intimate descriptions will offer some small comfort, and there's a book within the book that will give English majors lots to talk about.

Half the City

St. Paul & the Broken Bones

Recommended by Ashley Patriarca

I joke with my friends that I had to come to the Philadelphia area to get introduced to a band from my hometown (Birmingham, Alabama). It's true, though – I first heard the band's first single, “Call Me,” while listening to WXPN. *Half the City* draws from the storied R&B and soul traditions of Muscle Shoals, as well as lead singer Paul Janeway's gospel background, to develop a consistently, gorgeously sad whole. Over the past two years, the album has become one that I listen to for comfort, for intensive writing sessions, maybe even for an average Wednesday afternoon when I'm singing in the car.

Here

Richard McGuire

Recommended by Amy Anderson

This innovative graphic novel follows the story of one particular space and the events that transpire in that place over thousands of years. The story is nonlinear, jumping through time and juxtaposing moments across millennia. It's a fascinating meditation on time, space, and impermanence.

How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America

Kiese Laymon

Recommended by Tim Dougherty

Laymon is one of the best male writers of the Hip Hop generation at honestly confronting the complexities at the intersections of race, gender, and culture. This unflinchingly self-critical and honest collection of nonfiction essays is for fans of Toni Morrison and James Baldwin, to be sure. But it's also for those of us who can't stop talking about Beyoncé and Mr. Carter or Kanye and Kim. It's dense bread for the seasoned Hip Hop head, but important and honest reading for everyone trying to be a good human being in 2016. See also his time travel coming-of-age novel entitled *Long Division*.

The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared

Jonas Jonasson

Recommended by Cheryl Wanko

After he climbs out the window, the centenarian explosives expert embarks on a life on the run involving a sto-

len suitcase, piles of money, several unfortunate deaths, an elephant, and much vodka. As the adventure unfolds, the quirky narrative fills in his past, which includes amusing encounters with Franco, Truman, Stalin, Mao, and Einstein's (fictional, I think) dimwit half-brother Herbert, among others. The book jacket describes it as "charming," and I thoroughly agree.

The Ice-Bound Compendium

Aaron Reed and Jacob Garbe

Recommended by Robert Fletcher

An innovative and sophisticated attempt at storytelling blending print and digital media, *The Ice-Bound Compendium* is both a printed art book and an "augmented-reality" app, which work together as an "interactive narrative game" about a lost polar expedition and the ghost in the machine that it has left behind. The game part of this work has won several awards in the two years since it debuted, but the art book appeared in its entirety just this year. You can find out more at <http://ice-bound.com/>.

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

Rebecca Skloot

Recommended by Bill Lalicker

This book was recently chosen by the Frederick Douglass Institute's Dr. Grasty Gaines One Book WCU Project for campus-wide, curricular and extracurricular discussion in 2016-2017. This book tells the story of the African American woman whose cancer cells were taken in 1951 and reproduced, and—to the great profit of many in the medical establishment, but without the consent or profit of Ms. Lacks—became a standard ingredient of medical research for generations stretching to today. As Lisa Morganelli said in her New York Times review, the book "introduces us to the 'real live woman,' the children who survived her, and the interplay of race, poverty, science and one of the most important medical discoveries of the last 100 years. Skloot narrates the science lucidly, tracks the racial politics of medicine thoughtfully and tells the Lacks family's often painful history with grace. She also confronts the spookiness of the cells themselves, intrepidly crossing into the spiritual plane on which the family has come to understand their mother's continued presence in the world. Science writing is often just about 'the facts.' Skloot's book, her first, is far deeper, braver and more wonderful."

Indomitable: The Online Home of Chauncey DeVega

Chauncey DeVega

Recommended by Michael Burns

In his blog, DeVega, like Barthes, views politics as professional wrestling. He speaks truth to power, constantly questions, and does so with enough humor to have his readers keep hope alive for a better future.

In the Night of Time

Antonio Munoz Molina

Recommended by John Ward

This stylistically and conceptually rich novel traces the passage and, more importantly, the working of time in the life of its protagonist, a creatively gifted but morally challenged Spanish architect who leaves his (to him) uninteresting wife and their two children to escape the lethal idiocy of his country's civil war by migrating to the United States in pursuit of both a lucrative commission to design a library for a richly-endowed eastern college and a brilliant and beautiful young American woman who ironically turns out, despite her genuine affection for him, to insist on returning to Spain to participate in the war that her would-be lover struggled to escape. This may be the closest thing to a great contemporary novel I've encountered since reading Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* several years ago.

Infidel

Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Recommended by Hannah Ashley

This memoir is from 2008 but allowed me a deep (and disturbing) insight into, well, everything, today. Here is part of what the blurb says: "Infidel shows the coming of age of this distinguished political superstar and champion of free speech as well as the development of her beliefs, iron will, and extraordinary determination to fight injustice. Raised in a strict Muslim family, Hirsi Ali survived civil war, female mutilation, brutal beatings, adolescence as a devout believer during the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, and life in four troubled, unstable countries ruled largely by despots."

Last Mass

Jamie Iredell

Recommended by Tim Dougherty

This memoir is about coming to terms with your Catholic upbringing in the state of California, set in the midst of the Church's recent decision to canonize Fr. Junipero Serra (the controversial founder of the California mission system). This is complex, on-point, and direct memoir writing that preserves important history. This is writing that mixes the personal and the historical in ways that help us all locate ourselves here on this continent long called Turtle Island. This is my first read this summer, and I couldn't be more excited.

Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route

Saidiya Hartman

Recommended by Michael Burns

Hartman laminates primary and archival research with personal narrative and historical reenactments. The result is a lush read that disrupts notions of time, space, nation, and race.

A Man Called Ove

Frederik Backman

Recommended by Deidre Johnson

Ove knows just how people should behave and how his neighborhood should be managed—even if others don't appreciate his attempts to bring them in line with expectations. He also has a plan for his life, which keeps going awry thanks in part to his new neighbors. Translated from the Swedish, the book is sometimes poignant, other times humorous; a *Booklist* reviewer stated, "If there was an award for 'Most Charming Book of the Year,' this first novel by a Swedish blogger-turned-overnight-sensation would win hands down."

Metropolis, ArchAndroid, & The Electric Lady

Janelle Monáe

Recommended by Ashley Patriarca

I couldn't pick just one of Janelle Monáe's albums here: you truly need to listen to all of them. Monáe's music relates the story of Cindi Mayweather, an android sent to save humanity from a totalitarian government. In Mayweather's story, Monáe ambitiously and deftly weaves together influences from science fiction, film, and history

to establish a tightly knit narrative about what it means to love and to be free. In doing so, she deliberately establishes her work as carrying forward Afrofuturist traditions in the vein of Octavia Butler and Sun Ra.

Musically, too, you'll find a lot to love in each of Monáe's albums. ArchAndroid's "Tightrope" (with Outkast's Big Boi) was on heavy rotation during my dissertation for its sheer fun and confidence, and Electric Lady boasts "Giving 'Em What They Love," a standout collaboration with Prince.

The Millionaire and the Bard: Henry Folger's Obsessive Hunt for Shakespeare's First Folio

Andrea E. Mays

Recommended by Joseph Navitsky

Mays recreates Henry Folger's quest, in the early 1900s, to locate and purchase copies of the 1623 First Folio, the first published anthology of Shakespeare's plays. Archival research into newspaper accounts and private letters and telegrams reveals a man driven by a single objective: to wrest copies of the Folio, and other early Shakespeare printings, from British and European libraries and relocate them to America. Eventually, 82 of the folios would form the core of the collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, the world's premier center for Shakespeare research and appreciation.

The Nature of College

James Farrell

Recommended by Cheryl Wanko

An important yet easy read that can fundamentally change one's view of college. It examines all aspects of college life—from clothes to computers to sex to politics—from the perspective of environmentalism. How would we understand the community that is a campus if we actually believed the physical condition of the world—and thus the mental and existential conditions of all of its inhabitants, human and non-human—mattered?

The Neapolitan Novels

Elena Ferrante

Recommended by Carolyn Sorisio

Forget about the speculation regarding Elena Ferrante's identity and focus on this compelling and beautiful four-book series (translated from Italian), with an extraordinary narrative voice telling us about an equally

extraordinary friendship, one forged in a Naples childhood and spanning the breadth of the women's lives. There is something about the slowness of the novels' pace which cumulatively becomes compelling, as our narrator negotiates the friendship, the politics and intensity of her neighborhood, and the shifting Italian political and cultural landscape. It is little wonder to me that the final book in the series is short-listed for the Booker Prize.

Nimona

Noelle Stevenson

Recommended by Sarah Paylor

The back of this YA graphic novel proclaims it to have "NEMESSES! DRAGONS! SCIENCE! SYMBOLISM!" And it has all of these things! I found the story and characters to be so delightful that, upon finishing the novel and discovering, to my utter horror, that *there is not a second book*, I had to just re-read this one.

Not the Israel My Parents Promised Me

Harvey Pekar and JT Waldman

Recommended by Amy Anderson

Shortly before his death, underground comics artist Harvey Pekar teamed up with Philly-based graphic novelist JT Waldman to compose his memoir, not surprisingly in the form of a graphic novel. The memoir recounts Pekar's wrestling with his Jewish heritage, including the role of religion and the establishment of the state of Israel. JT Waldman will be visiting West Chester's campus in November 2016, so reading this book would be a great way to prepare for our discussions about storytelling in visual narratives.

A Place to Stand

Jimmy Santiago Baca

Recommended by Vicki Tischio

This memoir is, basically, a literacy narrative. It's about how literacy, writing, and developing a love of language helped Baca rise above a life of crime, drugs and poverty. He describes his life growing up poor with a dysfunctional family and details his experiences in prison and talks about how becoming literate and writing poetry changed his life. It's a moving "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" story that really gets at the soft spots for English teachers.

The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century

Nikolas Rose

Recommended by Ayan Gangopadhyay

Drawing upon Michel Foucault's notion of "biopower," this book seeks to address the problematics of "life" in the 21st century: what are the choices that are made available to us that overdetermine our decision regarding being alive diurnally?

PRY

Samantha Gorman and Danny Cannizzaro

Recommended by Robert Fletcher

A multimodal novella for the iPad, *PRY* tells the story of a wounded vet returned from the Persian Gulf War, whose past and present merge in the reader's exploration of his conscious and subconscious thoughts. The work takes advantage of the tactile affordances of the tablet computer—instead of offering simulated page-turning, this born-digital work of literature asks readers to "pinch" and "pry" their way through a "hybrid of cinema, gaming, and text." You can download this work-in-progress (about half complete at this time) through the App Store and find out more at <http://prynovella.com/>.

The Redemptive Self

Dan P. McAdams

Recommended by Paul Maltby

McAdams, a psychologist, looks at how the logic of redemption has shaped America's cultural imagination. He argues that the culture is suffused with secular versions of the Christian model of salvation, as seen in the "redemptive stories" recounted on talk shows, in popular magazines, self-help manuals, autobiographies of presidents and celebrities, rationales for foreign policy, psychotherapies, New Age narratives of spiritual renewal, etc., etc. Americans, says McAdams, expect that bad experiences should be redeemable, that the negative (e.g. illness, loss, failure) be viewed so as to identify a positive outcome. This book provides valuable insights into contemporary American culture and can be placed in a distinguished tradition of scholarship on the role of redemptive thinking in American life, such as Ernest Tuveson's *Redeemer Nation* and George Shulman's *American Prophecy*.

Regeneration

Pat Barker

Recommended by Carla Verderame

Barker provides an interesting look at the effects of combat fatigue on soldiers in WWI—and the treatment they receive at the Craiglockhart Hospital in Edinburgh. The book is fiction, but Barker includes British war poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen as well as Dr. William Rivers, the psychiatrist who treats both of them. This is the first novel in the *Regeneration* trilogy.

Satin Island

Tom McCarthy

Recommended by John Ward

The central character (identified simply as “U”) of this novel—which was short-listed for the 2015 Man Booker Prize—is a highly regarded anthropologist who leaves the increasingly irrelevant academy to join a London-based consulting firm, where he gradually discovers that, instead of helping ordinary people understand the semiotics of the products they encounter in the marketplace, he is an unwilling accomplice in a successful scheme to create a homogenous worldwide culture of consumerism.

Spending the Holidays with People I Want to Punch in the Throat

Jen Mann

Recommended by B.G. Betz

An offshoot of Mann’s popular blog, this humorous collection of essays may help you to enjoy some downtime between semesters.

Station Eleven

Emily St. John Mandel

Recommended by Deidre Johnson

Winner of the Arthur C. Clarke award and a National Book Award finalist, Mandel’s novel follows two stories and timelines – one, a traveling group of players performing Shakespeare in small hamlets in an post-pandemic world; the other, glimpses of interlocked lives in the (pre-pandemic) present. One *Kirkus* reviewer calls it “[a]n erudite examination of the role of art and culture in the survival of humanity . . . [and an] exemplary post-apocalyptic literary novel.”

The Subversive Copy Editor

Carol Fisher Saller

Recommended by Ashley Patriarca

Written by the editor of the *Chicago Manual of Style’s* online Q&A, this collection highlights the challenges, delights, and raging ego clashes of the author-editor relationship. If you ever have to write or edit any kind of document, I strongly recommend *The Subversive Copy Editor*.

The Thrilling Adventures of Lovelace and Babbage

Sydney Paula

Recommended by Sarah Paylor

A quasi-historical (the footnotes alert you when the dialogue is taken from a historical document), quasi-alternate reality graphic novel that proposes that Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage made a working analytical engine, and proceeded to have adventures with it. Warning: Contains footnotes, endnotes, and appendixes of historical newspaper and magazine clippings. Also Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Until the Quiet Comes

Flying Lotus

Recommended by Michael Burns

FlyLo paints with sound.

Voyage of the Sable Venus and other Poems

Robin Coste Lewis

Recommended by Tim Dougherty

This 2015 National Book Award Winner for poetry revolves around the tour de force title poem—a painstakingly researched, nearly 80-page lyric poem that is constructed completely from the titles, catalog entries, or exhibit descriptions of Western Art objects that depict the Black Female form. Lewis both preserves and reworks this painful history, wringing a new future from precise public memory. As a mentor once taught me: when you’ve been written on, write back.

***A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America
on the Appalachian Trail***

Bill Bryson

Recommended by Michelle F. Blake

This thoroughly engaging book about a man who decides one day to take a walk in the woods on the 2000+ miles of the Appalachian Trail is a treat. As a friend of mine put it, it will have you wavering between saying, “I HAVE to hike the Appalachian Trail someday!” and “There is no way in hell that I will EVER hike the Appalachian Trail!” No matter which side you’re on at any moment, you’ll love reading it.

The White Road: Journey into an Obsession

Edmund de Waal

Recommended by Rodney Mader

De Waal, a renowned ceramicist and author of the memoir *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (which I never read, but I know people love), writes about his journey to find the source of porcelain, that fragile whiteness inexplicably borne from earthen clay, from its origin in Jingdezhen, China, through Dresden, Versailles, and Plymouth, with side trips to South Carolina’s Ayoree Mountain and, alas, Dachau. As a porcelain maker himself, de Waal writes evocatively and with longing about materials, locations, history, genius, madness, and feelings both external and internal. Make a cup of tea, dispose of the tea, and admire the craft of this curious, sensitive, literary artisan.

The Widow

Fiona Barton

Recommended by B.G. Betz

This novel is a psychological thriller that might cause you to rethink your privacy settings on Facebook.

Compiled by Cheryl Wanko

Page design by Ashley Patriarca

Cover image: “Book to Be Read,” by Flickr user Nastasia Causse (Creative Commons license)