

WCU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SUMMER READING & VIEWING LIST 2014

This annual list presents suggestions for summer reading from individual faculty of the West Chester University English Department. You can also find this list & its predecessors at http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/sch_cas.eng/faculty/.

This year, faculty also recommend films, blogs, & other reading & viewing delights!

Title:

Recommended by:

10% Happier
Dan Harris

Vicki Tischio

Who couldn't use to be 10% happier? This is a kind of self-help book that chronicles the experiences of a news anchor (the author), who had an anxiety attack on air, as he learns to channel his inner voice more productively through meditation. The book includes references to recent science on meditation. It's a helpful book so far. I have to admit I'm still reading it. I'm only 5% happier right now, I guess.

Another Insane Devotion: On the Love of Cats and Persons
Peter Trachtenberg

Cheryl Wanko

Trachtenberg charts the unravelling of his marriage against the disappearance of his pet, the love for people and for animals, and the struggles and compromises of our many attachments. Plus you learn what it means when a cat blinks at you. A cat book for people afraid of "cat books."

*An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth:
What Going to Space Taught Me About Ingenuity,
Determination, and Being Prepared for Anything*
Chris Hadfield

Tim Ray

This book, written by a retired Canadian astronaut, chronicles his pursuit of his dream to become an astronaut and his lengthy career as an astronaut. From having heard a couple of excerpts from the text, I thought it would be more of a reflective work throughout (as hinted at by the first part of the title), but the text really focused more on the second part of the title. Specifically, the mantra of "what's going to kill me next?" seems to always be at the forefront of a well-prepared astronaut's thoughts, and it's a good question for all of us to keep in mind for surviving day-to-day incidents as well as for striving to live a long and enjoyable life.

Autumn of the Patriarch
Gabriel García Márquez

Geetha Ramanathan

AVA

Kristine Ervin

Carole Maso

What do you do when you encounter a novel without a plot? A narrator whose past and voice can't always be pinned down? An entire book written as fragments of memory and poetry and feminist theory and lines like "Olives hang like earrings in late August" or "Green, how much I want you green"? Answer: You relish in the lyrical messiness and allow yourself to rethink traditional narrative form. The situation of the novel is that Ava Klein, thirty-nine years old, lies in her hospital bed on her last day to live. Past memories of people and places she loves, music and books that move her, intertwine with the present, all in fragmented form, so that the life of Ava Klein builds and is fleshed out as the novel progresses. It asks us to let go of our expectations of plot and character, to give ourselves over to repetition, juxtaposition, and collage, so that we may meditate on themes like mortality, sexuality, art, everything that is said and the silence that surrounds it.

Between Page and Screen

Robert Fletcher

<http://www.betweenpageandscreen.com/>

Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse

Between Page and Screen is an augmented reality book – a sort of high-tech artist's book. It appears to be a collection of abstract geometric symbols, but when it's held up to a webcam communicating with the accompanying website, three-dimensional arrangements of words – static or kinetic – appear onscreen, or, rather, floating in the "augmented" space between the screen and book. The narrative told through these poems is a love story full of wit and wordplay about P and S but also a philosophical dialogue between the P(age) and S(creen).

The Big Sleep

Joseph Navitsky

Raymond Chandler

Chandler's first novel (1939) introduces readers to the iconic Los Angeles private eye, Philip Marlowe, who must dodge bullets (and the advances of the women he protects) while getting to the bottom of a high-stakes blackmailing scheme. The 1946 film version starring Humphrey Bogart is also excellent though it bears precisely no resemblance to the novel.

Book of Ages: The Life and Opinions of Jane Franklin

Eleanor Shevlin

Jill Lepore

A model of meticulous research, this biography reconstructs the life of Jane Franklin, youngest sister of the renowned Benjamin. While ties to a famous sibling might suggest that recuperating Jane's life would be an easy task, it was not; Lepore displays the skills that it takes to accomplish the difficult recovery of a person lost to history and the rewards such efforts yield. Beautifully written, the ensuing account reveals much about not only Jane but also life in New England as well as insights about her brother Ben.

Boy, Snow, Bird

Rachel Banner

Helen Oyeyemi

A sharp and beautiful riff on the Snow White fairy tale, focusing on three generations of characters coming to terms with all of the painful things that whiteness and womanhood mean in the United States.

*A Discovery of Witches &
Shadow of Night*

Hyoejin Yoon

Deborah Harkness

Twilight for middle-aged academics (English professors more specifically): vampires and witches, archival research, and time travel to Shakespearean England. First book's story centers around a lost manuscript, and much of the action takes place in the venerable Bodleian Library in Oxford, England. Period details of 16th-century dress, furnishing, architecture, and culture in the second book are vivid and engaging. Brings to life the mysterious group of poets and scientists now known as The School of Night. Members like Walter Raleigh, Christopher Marlowe, and the Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland are fleshed out in titillating detail. Don't listen on Audiobooks: narrator is quite talented, but portrays the protagonist in the tone of a cloyingly tragic romantic heroine. Third book in this All Souls Trilogy soon to be released.

*The Drunken Botanist: The Plants That Create the
World's Great Drinks*

Rodney Mader

Amy Stewart

Stewart, a journalist and gardener, has previously published *Wicked Bugs: the Louse that Conquered Napoleon's Army & Other Diabolical Insects* and *Wicked Plants: the Weed that Killed Lincoln's Mother & Other Botanical Atrocities*—both fine, delightfully-illustrated books. Here, she turns her attention to the plants that make alcoholic beverages, from grains and tubers to herbs and spices; and to the fruits, roots, bark and flowers of trees. Well-written, funny, and filled with wonderful facts, the book also includes recipes, so that you need never run out of cocktail chatter or cocktails themselves.

East of the Sun

B.G. Betz

Julia Gregson

This 2008 novel is a gripping saga of three Englishwomen who travel to India as part of the "fishing fleet" to find husbands and to live during the final days of the Raj.

Eleanor & Park

B.G. Betz

Rainbow Rowell

This YA novel is pitch perfect in its depiction of college anxieties about independence and romance and fitting in, with a side depiction of obsessive fan fiction too.

Fantasy Life

Jordan Schugar

Matthew Berry

If you love Fantasy Sports, and are hoping to win your fantasy league, this probably isn't the book for you. Rather, *Fantasy Life* is full of funny vignettes about those little things that make fantasy sports one of the biggest trends today like friendship, competition, and tattoos for league losers.

The Fault in Our Stars

Mary Clark

John Green

YA literature: 16 year old Hazel Grace Lancaster is dying, but through a medical miracle, she has a few more years of life. She knows nothing else but being terminal, and worries how her parents will cope when she's gone. Augustus Waters walks into her Cancer Kid Support Group, and their story begins. Funny, and tragic. Looking forward to reading more from John Green.

A Fine Balance

John Ward

Rohinton Mistry

Although I don't share some reviewers' admiration for Mistry as a prose stylist, I do believe he presents a powerful, and still-relevant, rendition of life in India during Indira Gandhi's politically-motivated State of Emergency in the mid-1970s. *A Fine Balance* is notable for its strong tone of indignation as well as its nuanced portrayal of Hindu-Islamic relations. One of the novel's most sympathetic characters is a benevolent Muslim tailor who teaches the skills of his trade to the two sons of a low-caste Hindu friend, only to see his kindness lead to ruin (death in one instance and castration in the other) at the hands of a brutal upper-caste Hindu who can't bear to see the young men violate a still-operative, though illegal, caste system.

Flight Behavior

Hannah Ashley

Barbara Kingsolver

Not only an inquiry into spirituality and relationships, as well as a kick in the pants about the environment, but also one of the most incisive portraits of rural poverty, and a cultural critique of contemporary images of that, that I have read. And not didactic, for the most part, on any of it.

*From Gods to God; How the Bible Debunked, Suppressed,
or Changed Ancient Myths and Legends*

Michael Brooks

Avigdor Shinan, Zair Zakovitch

Maybe the subtitle says it all. The authors search for gaps, contradictions, and alternate narratives that reveal the polytheistic origins of the Hebrews.

The Goldfinch

Donna Tartt

K. Jamie Feiler: This epic sized novel follows the trials and tribulations of a young boy who unintentionally steals a famous work of art after he escapes a bombing in an art museum. The bombing kills his mother and essentially leaves him on his own. Tartt is a master at character development, and the cast of characters in this (her newest) novel is no exception!

Richard Scholl: This novel isn't for people who don't like long novels. Donna Tartt balances contemporary issues including terrorism, post-traumatic stress disorder and rampant drug and alcohol abuse with remarkable storytelling pulsing with suspense, ever present potential for disastrous consequences and unrequited love. Perhaps most surprising of all is her thesis (at least one of them): highly imperfect characters' mistakes can lead them to a kind of salvation and something like happiness. Perhaps most importantly of all, I couldn't stop reading this novel.

Vicki Tischio: A novel about a 13-year old boy who has lost his mother. He keeps a painting that reminds him of her. This painting draws him into intrigue. It's a fun read.

Carla Verderame: This is another of Tartt's smart novels. She combines themes of family, friendship, and loss while commenting on the value of art – particularly painting – in our lives.

Also recommended by Eleanor Shevlin & Heather Bickley

The Great War: July 1st, 1916:

Kuhio Walters

The First Day of the Battle of the Somme

Joe Sacco

It's the story of that incomprehensibly destructive day – nearly 20,000 dead British soldiers by the end – but not in writing. Sacco (well-known and often referred to as a "cartoon journalist") drew out the events of the day on a single, 24-foot panorama, which is folded according-style in an over-sized slipcase. Included is a powerful, historically detailed essay by journalist-historian Adam Hochschild, as well as an annotated mini-version of the longer "comic." This "book" will leave you marveling at the beauty of Sacco's artistry, at how much narrative detail he is able to fit into it, and perhaps even at the fact that this is a "story" that truly cannot be told on a Kindle. The most astonishing thing about it, though, is that a cartoon can convey so much about this about this catastrophic, nearly unimaginable event.

Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal

Jordan Schugar

Mary Roach

Previously I recommended *Stiff*, *Bonk*, and *Packing for Mars*, and Roach does it again with *Gulp* by writing about all things alimentary. Specifically, her book asks and answers questions about what we eat, why we eat it, and what happens to those things we put in our mouths. Roach is funny, articulate, and informative and after reading the book you'll have plenty of fodder for backyard bbq small talk.

The Husband's Secret

Michelle Blake

Liane Moriarty

The Husband's Secret opens with an introduction to three women: Cecilia Fitzpatrick has a wonderful life, until she discovers an old, unopened letter from her husband to her that is labeled "To be opened on the occasion of my death"; Tess O'Leary learns that her husband Will wants to leave her for her cousin and best friend, Felicity; and Rachel Crowley is haunted by the unsolved mystery of her teenaged daughter's murder years before. Moriarty artfully weaves these seemingly unconnected stories of suburban Australian housewives in way that will leave you unable to put the book down, and that will leave you pondering secrets, truth-telling, and the value of each.

The Invention of Wings

Carla Verderame

Sue Monk Kidd

Kidd's new book centers on the Abolitionist sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimke.

JAMerica: The History of the Jam Band and Festival Scene

Tim Ray

Peter Connors

This book chronicles the development of the "jam band" and music festival scene in the U.S., which originated with the Grateful Dead and their tours and their legion of traveling fans (Deadheads), but which has evolved to include a wide variety of bands and an ever-growing array of summer music festivals. According to the author, jam bands nurture a close relationship with their fans, fostered through constant touring and the mutual belief that each performance is a unique, shared event. The book is an oral history in that it is a compilation of a series of interviews that are arranged to form a chronology. Connors is also the author of *Growing Up Dead: The Hallucinated Confessions of a Teenage Deadhead* (2009), a very readable personal narrative of being a Deadhead during the 1980s.

Johannes Cabal the Necromancer

Sarah Paylor

Jonathan Howard

This is a deeply amusing (if rather dark and twisted) story. Johannes Cabal has sold his soul to the devil in exchange for the knowledge of necromancy. He then realizes that the lack of a soul is interfering with his scientific studies, and attempts to retrieve it. The following volume, *Johannes Cabal the Detective*, is my favorite.

Leaving the Sea: Stories

Christopher Merkner

Ben Marcus

Strange, hilarious, and challenging, the stories in this collection provide a really smart gloss of the twenty-first century short story – its history, its present moment, and to some degree its exciting future.

The Language of Life and Death: The Transformation of Experience in Oral Narrative

Margaret Ervin

William Labov

Labov is a linguist at the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to authoring many texts on sociolinguistics, he has a theory of oral narrative, which emerged in the course of making recordings in order to analyze our vernacular. He found that people revert to their mother tongue once they launch into a story, and having listened to hundreds of stories, he became interested in the way they function. For those interested in reading or writing narratives, this theory of orality provides a useful companion. His book is technical, but also geared to a broader audience than linguists. If you want to know how to record and analyze oral narrative, he lays that out for you. How can you get someone to tell you a tale? Read to find out. Also fascinating is his claim that we change the course of our lives when we tell a story. My favorite idea from this book is the "self in whose interest the story is told." In other words, when we tell a story, we do so in order to construct ourselves in one way or another – as competent, heroic, innocent, friendly, etc. – and the self we construct may alter the course of our life. Stories exist at the intersection of the past and the present, transforming both.

The Last Policeman & Countdown City

Charles Bauerlein

Ben Winters

The first two novels in this fast-paced, end-of-the-world trilogy are worth reading this summer. Do so before Winters publishes the last of the set and it becomes a TV series. The premise of these two thrillers is that an approaching comet will create a near-extinction event in three months' time. As the ties that bind community his New England community pull loose, Detective Hank Palace struggles to stay true to his oath as an officer and to solve crimes even as chaos breaks out all around him. Winters announced in January that the third book will be titled *World of Trouble*, but here's no publication date set.

The Life of Milarepa

Michael Brooks

Tsangnyön Heruka

A 15th-century saint's life of a Tibetan Buddhist. He starts by magically invoking a hailstorm to kill 35 enemies of his family and ends by attaining Enlightenment. Penguin Classics republished it.

Longbourn

Ashley Patriarca

Jo Baker

Baker's *Longbourn* shares a side of *Pride and Prejudice* that Jane Austen never reveals: the labor that makes life possible for the Bennets. This story of the servants at Longbourn is riveting, especially if you enjoyed *Downton Abbey*.

The Lowland
Jhumpa Lahiri

Maureen McVeigh, Heather Bickley

This novel begins with two brothers in 1960s India, but focuses on what occurs to the brothers and their family in India and America over the following decades. Lahiri's mastery of short fiction, as shown in *Interpreter of Maladies*, does not completely translate to the longer form of the novel, but her style, creation of character, and use of place are still evident and engaging. I recommend this novel, but if you haven't read her collections of short stories (*Maladies* and *Unaccustomed Earth*), I suggest those first.

Lunch Poems
Frank O'Hara

Graham MacPhee

Snack on the honking, pulsating, smiling city streets and remember not to totally regret life ...

MaddAddam Trilogy:

Shannon Mrkich

Oryx and Crake, Year of the Flood, & MaddAddam

Margaret Atwood

The MaddAddam trilogy is *not* your YA-variety "end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it" dystopian thriller (although I love *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*). This tripartite social-political-economic-technological recounting of the waterless flood is a frighteningly realistic, character-driven, Atwood-esque (think *The Handmaid's Tale*) juxtaposition of time and space, past, present and possible future. Atwood's intricate interlacing of parallel stories within and across books and of friendships, lovers, and enemies reminds us of how much our lives are interconnected and how fragile we are.

The Magicians and Mrs. Quent

Sarah Paylor

Galen Beckett

A delightful fantasy trilogy: the setting has a resemblance to eighteenth century England (socially, at least) but is otherwise quite unique. There are parties, inheritance problems, semi-sentient trees, magicians, politics, revolutions and spies, witches, monsters and creatures which are like none I have previously encountered, and a strong heroine. This book is followed by *The House on Durrow Street & The Master of Heathcrest Hall* to complete the trilogy.

Nebraska

Jeff Sommers

Alexander Payne (director)

A visually beautiful (B&W) road film about a near-senile father and his adult son. The movie is funny, heart-warming, and heart-breaking. The performances by Bruce Dern and June Squibb are remarkable, and the local residents who appear to be amateur actors add the ring of authenticity. The haunting soundtrack hooked me from the opening frames of this memorable film, my favorite of 2014.

New River: A Journal of Digital Writing and Art

Robert Fletcher

<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/journals/newriver/13Fall/index.html>

From Virginia Tech's Center for Digital Discourse and Culture, *New River* has published interesting electronic literature since the 1990s.

The New York Review of Books

John Ward

This biweekly magazine (not to be confused with *The New York Times Book Review*) offers extensive, probing and extremely well-informed reviews of important books in a variety of fields, as well as frequent free-standing essays on compelling subjects. If you lean toward an electronic subscription, I would strongly suggest subscribing on-line rather than through Kindle, simply because the on-line

version offers much more: extensive information on writers who have contributed to the issue, illustrations that are omitted from the Kindle issues, classified ads, and blogs that change almost daily.

No Impact Project

Cheryl Wanko

<http://noimpactproject.org/>

Colin Beavan

This site began with Beavan's blog as he and his family attempted to live in New York City for a year while making as little environmental impact as possible. They began with cutting out trash and progressed through eliminating fossil-fuel transportation, electricity, and non-local foods – then turned to giving back, since the goal was to do more good than harm. The site now not only hosts the blog but also videos from others who have done the No Impact Project and information for educators. You can also read the book, *No Impact Man*.

Olive Kitteridge

Carolyn Sorisio

Elizabeth Strout

One of our graduate students recommended this Pulitzer-Prize winning collection of short stories (published in 2008) to me as regional writing at its best. I am so pleased she did, as I don't know how I let this collection pass me by. Strout recalls earlier writers of New England while also writing contemporary prose.

One Hundred Years of Solitude

Geetha Ramanathan

Gabriel García Márquez

The Orphan Master's Son

Erin Hurt

Adam Johnson

This novel, which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction a few years ago, is a fantastical but well-researched tale of life in North Korea. Here's the Pulitzer description: "An exquisitely crafted novel that carries the reader on an adventuresome journey into the depths of totalitarian North Korea and into the most intimate spaces of the human heart."

Parents

Elizabeth Nollen

Bob Balaban (director)

This film stars Randy Quaid and Mary Beth Hurt. The tagline reads, "There's a new name for terror: Parents." This and *Serial Mom* (below) are both very funny parodies of Suburban Horror.

Pariah

Jeff Sommers

Dee Rees (director)

Alike is a teenager who fears coming out to her parents in this contemporary film set in Brooklyn. A sensitive and talented writer, Alike inhabits two worlds and struggles in both. A classic coming-of-age story, this film features wonderful performances by its young actors and the adults playing Alike's parents.

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

Stacy Esch

Annie Dillard

Like Dillard herself, this is a book that's hard to classify; it's a different kind of memoir, not so much about recalling the past as it is about capturing the present. It's a book about perception, about seeing and feeling our natural environment and ourselves within our environment, about deep engagement.

Natural science, philosophy, poetry, literature, and rhetoric in every sentence – a book to savor in small chunks that enlarge as you reflect on them.

The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall:
A Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery, and Crime

George Lippard
 Eleanor Shevlin
 A best-selling 1845 sensation novel, this lengthy work is not without its shortcomings in plot and crafting. What it does afford is a lurid tale critiquing the corruption, depravity of the elite, sexual exploitation, and more of Philadelphia in the 1840s. Read it this summer as preparation for events and discussions at WCU this coming fall that will culminate next spring with a leading book historian's talk about this novel, its author, and Philadelphia as a major US 19th-century publishing center.

The Rise and Fall of the Scandamerican Domestic
 Chris Merkner

Carolyn Sorisio
 I'd be remiss in not recommending this new collection, by one of West Chester University's faculty members. It is hands-down one of the best books I read this year, especially for its prose that balances the normal with the abnormal and the humorous with the disturbing.

Resonate
 Nancy Duarte

Jordan Schugar
 Published as a multi-touch book (available through the iTunes/iBooks), reading *Resonate* will change the way you approach presentations, specifically by understanding how multi-media can transform your message into a story. Duarte is a true innovator when it comes to presentations (she worked with Al Gore on *An Inconvenient Truth* and advises TED Talk presenters), and in *Resonate* she describes her theory for telling good stories with high quality digital content, ethos, and pathos.

Rustication
 Charles Palliser

B.G. Betz
 This new novel (2014) set during Victorian times has the moody, sinister atmosphere of a Wilkie Collins thriller.

The Secret History
 Donna Tartt

Joseph Navitsky
 While Tartt's third novel, *The Goldfinch*, continues to win accolades, *The Secret History* (1992) remains an excellent debut novel. The story follows six schoolmates who, as classics majors at a small liberal arts college in New England, begin to live out in bizarre and increasingly dangerous ways the ancient Greek texts they study and love.

Selected Works of JS Spivit
 Reif Larson

Teddy West
 A great story, especially if you like a lot of graphics with your words.

Serial Mom
 John Waters (director)

Elizabeth Nollen
 Stars Kathleen Turner, Sam Waterston, and Riki Lake. The tagline is "Every Mom wants to be wanted, but not for Murder One."

Shades of Milk & Honey

Mary Robinette Kowal

Ashley Patriarca

This wonderfully mannered book imagines what would happen in Austen-era England if magic existed. Jane, the main character, expertly wields the glamour that is considered just another maidenly art as she tries to navigate family and personal concerns. This book is the first in a series; later volumes reimagine spy and heist novels.

Sherlock

This BBC series is brilliant. Watch it.

Sarah Paylor

The Signature of all Things

Elizabeth Gilbert

Michael Brooks

This novel has a satisfyingly 19th-century shape and a very 21st-century concern with female identity and the moral dilemmas addressed by evolutionary theory. The setting is a very interesting version of 19th-century Philadelphia.

The Silent House

Orhan Pamuk

Teddy West

A sly grandmother entertains her acquisitive family.

Spectral Nationality: Passages of Freedom from Kant to Post-colonial Literatures of Liberation

Pheng Chea

Ayan Gangopadhyay

This book is an attempt to locate the notion of "nation" in the 19th century German Idealist philosophy. Chea does a great job showing the whole gamut of post-colonial theory (as we now know it especially in the US) to be practically Kantian in essence, and as such, to be completely 'romantic.'

SpringGun Press E-lit Archive<http://www.springgunpress.com/elit-archive>

Erin Costello and Mark Rockswold

Robert Fletcher

Preserving the "electronic literature, digital poetry, digital art, digital writing, interdisciplinary digital art" (or whatever you want to call it) that they've been publishing since 2009.

That Old Cape Magic

Richard Russo

Stacy Esch

Russo's main character is a middle aged man confronting his dysfunctional family relationships. And he's an academic! And so are his parents!

*There Is a Bird on Your Head!**We Are in a Book! & I Broke My Trunk*

Mo Willems

Andrew Sargent

These three warm and witty children's books—starring Gerald the Elephant and his best friend Piggie—are favorites in the Sargent household and treats for any early reader. Seven-year-old Sylvia loves them "because they're funny," and four-year-old Mimi says of *We Are in a Book!*, "I love it because Gerald and Piggie don't know they're in a book. But then they find out."

Tom & Lorenzo

tomandlorenzo.com

Tom Fitzgerald & Lorenzo Marquez

Philadelphia-based TLo (as they're affectionately known by their fans) offer snarky critiques of pop culture on their self-titled website. If you're a fan of *Mad Men*, you must check out their detailed analyses of the costume design for each character.

Ashley Patriarca

Trieste

Dasa Drndic

Described as "experimental and fractured" by *The New Yorker*, Drndic writes a gripping account of a woman's search for her lost son during the Holocaust. Drndic blurs boundaries by including historical documents and transcripts from Italian Jews under Nazi occupation while classifying her work as a novel.

Carla Verderame

An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions

Jean Dreze & Amartya Sen

Two highly regarded economists (Sen is a Nobel Prize Laureate) offer a penetrating and painstakingly documented analysis of the huge contradiction between India's status not only as an emerging economic superpower but also as "the world's largest democracy," and the fact that roughly half of its population suffers an astounding deprivation of material necessities as well as basic human rights. The authors assert that even Bangladesh, with only a fraction of the larger nation's wealth, has in recent years moved ahead of India in the category of "Human Development." *An Uncertain Glory* is, I think, essential reading for anyone who wants to understand both the vast potential of India and the manifold problems that impede the optimum development of that potential.

John Ward

We Need New Names

NoViolet Bulawayo

Bulawayo's first novel, short-listed for the Man Booker prize, tells the story of a young Zimbabwean immigrant to the United States. The novel contrasts her life in Zimbabwe during a near-collapse of the country with her disappointing and troubling new life in Michigan. There's much here to discuss for WCU students, particularly in seeing our culture through the lens of a new American.

Jeff Sommers

Welcome to our Hillbrow

Phaswane Mpe

Geetha Ramanathan

White Noise

Don DeLillo

This classic just gets better and better with age. Unplug your cellphone, close your laptop, power down the desktop, deactivate your Netflix, and return to the 80's DeLillo style.

Stacy Esch

Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast: A Field Guide

Peter Del Tredici

Del Tredici is Senior Research Scientist at Harvard's Arnold Arboretum, and his copiously-illustrated book offers two disparate delights. The first is that of identifying the "weeds" you encounter every day, and then spouting off about them to whoever will listen ("that's lamb's quarters, *chenopodium album*, which was used as a potherb until after the Depression!"). The second, more important, is in his introduction, which knits together the stories of these plants with historical works such as Dioscorides's *De Materia Medica* and Culpeper's *Complete Herbal*; the history of colonization; and their role in our future as we try to reconcile our increasing urbanization with our desire for a sustainable future.

Rodney Mader

*You Can't Always Get What You Want: My Life
with the Rolling Stones, the Grateful Dead
and Other Wonderful Reprobates*

Tim Ray

Sam Cutler

Cutler was the tour manager for the Rolling Stones during the late 1960s and the Grateful Dead during the early 1970s. He's also a very good storyteller. Aside from the usual rock-and-roll stories, Cutler also provides some interesting speculation on whether the Altamont concert tragedy was the result of a conspiracy by the Nixon administration to discredit the countercultural movement by supplying bad LSD to the concert-goers and by planting some troublemakers into the crowd and by pulling out uniformed law enforcement when the scene started to get ugly. Based on the events that he recounts leading up to the concert, his speculation seems highly possible. After the concert, when the Stones left Cutler in the U.S. to clean up the mess from Altamont, he then found that the band refused to accept his telephone calls and never paid him the money they owed him for working as their tour manager. He subsequently became the Grateful Dead's tour manager for several years before eventually calling it quits. He's still active in the music scene, which is how I got my autographed copy of his book at a music festival last year.

