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### About Read Read Read

The staff of the Shapiro Undergraduate Library at the University of Michigan compiled this list of books in response to requests from incoming students for summer reading suggestions. You may use the list in several ways:

- as a fresh approach to a subject studied in high school
- as an introduction to a field to be studied at U of M
- as informal learning and pleasure reading

Above all, the Library staff hopes the list will provide a stimulating glimpse into the intellectual and cultural world awaiting you at the University of Michigan.

### Fiction

**The Road** by Cormac McCarthy

A man and his son wander through the harsh, cold, violent, and dark landscape of post-apocalyptic America. In the midst of the bleakness, McCarthy creates a heartbreaking tale of love and redemption.

**Breath, Eyes, Memory** by Edwidge Danticat

Haitian writer Danticat pens a highly lyrical story about a twelve-year-old girl, Sophie Caico, living in Haiti, who is reunited with her mother, living in New York.

**Middlesex** by Jeffrey Eugenides

This modern American epic follows the lives of Cal Stephanides and three generations of family from a village near Mount Olympus to suburban life in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, and from Cal’s early life as the girl Calliope to his adulthood as the man Cal.
Fiction, cont.

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven by Sherman Alexie


Catch-22 by Joseph Heller

This satiric novel has long engaged readers with the wildly funny panorama of characters surrounding Captain John Yossarian, a World War II soldier trying to define sanity in a crazy world.

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston

Janie Crawford, a young Black woman, searches through three marriages for her inner self until she learns to live and experience love without relinquishing her heart and spirit.

White Teeth by Zadie Smith

Smith vividly explores a bevy of topics, including race, gender, and cultural traditions among Bengali and Jamaican immigrant communities in North London.

How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents by Julia Alvarez

This story of four sisters who must adjust to life in America after fleeing the Dominican Republic is told through a series of episodes beginning in adulthood and moving backwards to their wealthy childhood.

The Beat Book: Writings from the Beat Generation by Ann Waldman

This anthology of the best of the Beats includes poetry and prose excerpts, brief biographical sketches, an introduction by Ginsberg, a recommended beat vacation guide of the places where the gang passed out or recovered, and more scholarly references.

The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry by J.D. McClatchy

This anthology includes representative poems from both established and emerging poets, including Sylvia Plath, Robert Creeley, Robert Bly, Amy Clampitt, and Audre Lorde.

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay by Michael Chabon

Chabon’s 2001 Pulitzer prize-winning novel traces the lives of two cousins, Brooklyn-born Sam Clay and Josef Kavalier, a refugee from Nazi occupied Prague.

The Things They Carried by Tim O’Brien

Drawing on his personal experiences, Tim O’Brien explores the terror and unreality of war in this powerful collection of stories about the Vietnam War.

Kafka on the Shore by Haruki Murakami

Romp ing magical realism from an award-winning author, replete with fish raining from the sky, an appearance from fried chicken guru Colonel Sanders, and WWII Japanese soldiers who never age. Runaway teenager Kafka Tamura finds love and belonging on a road trip through modern Japan.

The Cellist of Sarajevo by Steven Galloway

The title character is a cellist who plays his
Fiction, cont.

instrument at the site of a mortar attack in honor of the victims. This novel tells the story of four people attempting to survive and hold on to their humanity during the siege of Sarajevo.

Bel Canto by Ann Patchett
A dinner party of the rich and powerful in an unnamed South American country takes a turn when rebels storm in, and the guests are taken hostage. The rebels and hostages form unexpected bonds as they are isolated from the wider world.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close by Jonathan Safran Foer
After his father dies on September 11th, nine year old Oskar goes on a quest around New York City to find the lock that matches a key he found in his father’s things.

Interpreter of Maladies by Jhumpa Lahiri
This Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of short stories explores the lives and relationships of Indian immigrants.

Winesburg, Ohio by Sherwood Anderson
A classic in the style of interrelated short stories, Anderson explores the dreams and desperation of the inhabitants of a small town in Ohio.

Please Look After Mom by Kyung-Sook Shin
A woman disappears from a train station in Seoul. As her family searches for her, they are forced to wonder how well they knew her.

This is the English translation of an extremely popular Korean novel.

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde
This classic Victorian farce is still uproariously funny. It’s about a man who pretends to be his non-existent brother Ernest to avoid unpleasant social responsibilities.

Salvage the Bones: A Novel by Jesmyn Ward
A fourteen year old girl in Mississippi discovers she is pregnant in the eve of Hurricane Katrina. This book, written by a UM alum, won the National Book Award in 2012.

The Tiger’s Wife: A Novel by Tea Obreht
A young woman in Eastern Europe attempts to understand her late grandfather’s life through the stories he told her as a child.

Old School by Tobias Wolff
This novel takes place in a New England prep school. The boys have a chance for an audience with famous authors when they visit, if they write the best manuscript. The narrator is an outsider at the school, from a very different background than his classmates, but he hopes to win and meet Ernest Hemingway.

The Bayou Trilogy: Under the Bright Lights, Muscle for the Wing, and The Ones You Do by Daniel Woodrell
These critically-acclaimed crime novels follow a detective through the dark side of rural Louisiana.
Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers by Mary Roach

Part C.S.I., part morbid curiosity, this book explores the unusual ways dead bodies have been used throughout history.


Nobel Laureate Feynman was known as a superb teacher. These lectures for undergraduates, first delivered in 1961-1963, are classics and still widely read today.

The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality by Brian Greene

Green presents some of the newest developments in physics theory. His engaging style and real world analogies make the concepts of physics accessible to the general science reader.

A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking

The Nobel-Prize-winning physicist provides an excellent introduction to the history of the universe.

Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher by Lewis Thomas

In this National Book Award-winning collection of essays, Thomas lyrically discusses cellular biology in such a way that “brings one very close to a belief that in some way, all life is connected.”

The Proteus Effect: Stem Cells and Their Promise for Medicine by Ann B. Parsons

This book offers a carefully researched look at the history of stem cell technologies and the political, legal and ethical debates swirling around the issue of stem cell research.

The Weather Makers: How Man is Changing the Climate and What It Means for Life on Earth by Tim Flannery

This accessible bestseller has been called the definitive book on global warming. It addresses the history, present, and potential impact of climate change.

The Beast in the Garden: The True Story of a Predator’s Return to Suburban America by David Baron

The central event in this book is the story of a young jogger in Idaho Springs, Colorado, who was stalked and killed by a mountain lion. Baron puts this event in the context of our evolving relationship with nature, making this event, and future ones, seem inevitable.

The Disappearing Spoon: And Other True Tales of Madness, Love, and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of Elements by Sam Kean

This book gives the odd history of the elements. The title comes from a classic science prank. One would make spoons out of gallium, which melts at 84 degrees Fahrenheit, and watch as guests’ spoons disappear in their tea.

The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks and Giants of the Ocean by Susan Casey

Picture a wave 100 feet tall. Such a wave used
Science, cont.

to be considered impossible; it would violate the laws of physics. However, not only do such waves exist, they appear to be becoming more common. Casey interviews the scientists who study these waves, and the surfers who attempt to ride them.

Written in Stone: Evolution, the Fossil Record, and Our Place in Nature by Brian Switek

This book is both a scientific history of the process of fossil discovery and interpretation and a call to recognize the beauty in the diversity of life forms created through evolution.

A New Human: The Startling Discovery and Strange Story of the “Hobbits” of Flores, Indonesia by Mike Morwood and Penny Van Oosterzee

This is the story of the 2004 discovery of Homo floresiensis, or the “hobbit,” in Indonesia.

Blind Descent: The Quest to Discover the Deepest Cave on Earth by James M. Tabor

In 2004, two attempts were made to explore some of the deepest places on earth. Two scientists spent months alone in some of the deepest caves in the world, one in Mexico and one in Georgia (the country). This book documents what they found, including 1,000 foot drops and underground waterfalls.

Technology

The Digital Divide: Arguments for and Against Facebook, Google, Texting, and the Age of Social Networking

The essays in this book, written by some of the big names in information science, address the promise and dangers of the digital world. They cover everything from online educational opportunities and more democratic access to information to cyber-bullying and lowering attention spans.

The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web is Changing What We Read and How We Think by Eli Pariser

Did you know that if you and the person next to you google the same thing, you may get entirely different results? That is because Google, like many other web sites, tracks your past decisions and provides personalized results. Pariser argues that this is a dangerous thing, both for ourselves and society, because it limits our exposure to information that challenges us.
Technology cont.

The Most Human Human: What Talking with Computers Teaches Us About What It Means to be Alive by Brian Christian

Every year, humans and computers compete in the Turing Test. They engage in text message conversations, and judges vote on who they believe is actually human. The computer that receives the most votes is named the most human computer. The human that gets the most votes is the most human human. The author competed in 2009. This book is his reflection on his experience, on the stunning capabilities of artificial intelligence, and on what it means to be human today.

And Then There’s This: How Stories Live and Die in Viral Culture by Bill Wasik

Wasik, the organizer of the first flash mob, analyzes the new media in the digital world. Now we have viral culture, with memes beginning with individuals and racing across society.

Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century by P.W. Singer

This book looks at the rise of robotic warfare and the impact it is having on the politics, law, and the ethics of conflict and war.

The Googlization of Everything: (And Why We Should Worry) by Siva Viadhyanathan

Viadhyanathan argues that we need to think critically about Google. He worries about intellectual property issues caused by Google’s projects, the global impact of the company, and the way Google affects how we think and view information.

The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood by James Gleik

Gleik looks at how we have stored, transmitted, and understood information throughout history. He includes chapters on everything from African talking drums to modern-day memes.

Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson

Love him or hate him, there’s no argument that Steve Jobs revolutionized the world of technology. This biography, based on more than 40 interviews, covers Jobs’ rise, company, and vision.
The Arts

What Happens Next: A History of American Screenwriting by Marc Norman
Norman writes the history of Hollywood, from the perspective of the screenwriter.

The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop—and Why It Matters by Tricia Rose
Rose discusses the controversy and discourse around hip hop. She argues that it has become the primary means to discuss race in America.

Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain by Oliver Sacks
Sacks explores how our brains interact with music. He describes individuals with profoundly unusual relationships with music, including a man who became a pianist at the age of 42, after he was struck by lightning.

Just Kids by Patti Smith
The story of Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe before they became famous. It’s a portrait of the artists’ world in New York City in the late ‘60’s and early ‘70’s.

A Year in Japan by Kate T. Williamson
A travelogue in watercolor of the year Williamson spent in Japan. Her images and accompanying text capture everyday moments in the culture.

You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination
This book explores the idea of mapmaking as art. It includes over 100 inventive maps, exploring both real and imagined places.

Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed by Harold Koda
A fascinating, image rich history of how fashion has been used to modify the human body.

Experiencing Architecture by Steen Eiler Rasmussen
In this classic, Rasmussen explores architectural experimentation throughout time and discusses the importance of good design.

Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels by Scott McCloud

A Challenge for the Actor by Uta Hagen
Uta Hagen, one of America’s outstanding stage actresses, has taught acting at the HB Studio in New York for more than forty years.

American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America by Robert Hughes
This book is the companion volume to the terrific PBS series—now on video—by the same name.

Satchmo: The Genius of Louis Armstrong by Gary Giddens
This book is a vivid biography of one of the greatest figures in American music.
The Arts, cont.

Apollo’s Angels: A History of Ballet by Jennifer Homans
Homans provides a comprehensive history of ballet. She also makes the controversial claim that the art form is dying.

What to Listen For in Music by Aaron Copeland
In this classic book, composer Aaron Copland discusses the elements and forms of music as well as the creative process.

American History

The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History by John M. Barry
Did you get your flu shot this year? In 1918, over 675,000 Americans died; most of the deaths were people aged 20-40.

One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark by Colin G. Galloway
A fascinating history of Native American history and culture before the arrival of the Europeans.

The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls by Joan Jacobs Brumberg
Joan Brumberg explores the historical context for the attitudes modern-day American girls have about their bodies.

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West by Dee Brown
A contemporary classic, this is a Native American perspective on the military and political history of westward expansion in the United States from 1860 to 1890.

Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans by Ronald Takaki
This comprehensive history of Asian Americans spans from the Chinese immigrants building the transcontinental railroad to the current stereotype of Asian students as the “model minority.”

The Children’s Blizzard by David Laskin
This is the story of one of the deadliest blizzards in the American plains. It occurred in the early days of weather forecasting and was called the “Schoolchildren’s Blizzard” because many of the victims were children on their way home from school.

Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America by Lillian Faderman
American History, cont.

This award-winning history examines this long-invisible group in American society and reveals a vital and vibrant subculture.

Bound for Canaan: The Epic Story of the Underground Railroad, America’s First Civil Rights Movement by Fergus M. Bordewich

More than 100,000 slaves traveled on the Underground Railroad. Its existence can be traced back to the early days of the American Revolution and was far more complex than just moving people north to freedom.

Unfamiliar Fishes by Sarah Vowell

A quirky account of the remarkable history of Hawaii.

Freedom Summer: The Savage Season That Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy by Bruce Watson

It was the summer of 1964. Hundreds of volunteers arrived in Mississippi to teach and agitate for civil rights. The murders of three of those volunteers would be a critical event in the civil rights struggle.

When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present by Gail Collins

This book tells the history of women in America from 1960, when they needed to get permission from their husbands to get a credit card, to 2008, when Hilary Clinton ran for president.

The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration by Isabel Wilkerson

Wilkerson tells the story of the twentieth century migration of African Americans from the south to northern and western cities through the experiences of three people.

Bitterly Divided: The South’s Inner Civil War by David Williams

Williams argues that Southerners were far more divided about the war than has been traditionally understood. He believes that this was a contributing factor to the South’s loss.

The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation by Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff

This book examines the media in the 1950’s and 1960’s and how it affected the civil rights movement.

The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl by Timothy Egan

Egan tells the story of the dust bowl, where the depression and drought combined with a lack of environmental understanding to form a disaster of massive proportions.

Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong by James W. Loewen

Loewen argues that historical education in America is a mess. In order to avoid contro-
**American History, cont.**

versy, textbooks present ‘sanitized’ history and outright lies to students. Loewen argues that, not only is this wrong, it makes history boring. In this book he discusses the most ‘sanitized’ chapters in American history and corrects the record.

People’s History of the United States by Howard Zinn

This is a classic in counter-history. Zinn presents American history from the point of view of the everyday people.

**World History**

We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will be Killed with our Families: Stories from Rwanda by Philip Gourevitch

This book documents the 1994 genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda. Gourevitch explores the factors that contributed to genocide as well as the aftermath.


Drawing on archaeological research, historical documents, and literature, the author illuminates a fascinating chapter in the history of women.

Operation Mincemeat: How a Dead Man and a Bizarre Plan Fooled the Nazis and Assured an Allied Victory by Ben Macintyre

You’d think it was a spy thriller. In order to divert the Nazis away from Sicily, where the Allies hoped to launch an attack, British spies came up with a plan that involved equipping a corpse with misleading documents.

Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World by Mark Pendergrast

Coffee has a complex history. Pendergrast traces the product from its initial discovery, which involved hyper goats, to the modern world and issues of deforestation and fair trade.
World History, cont.

King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa by Adam Hochschild

This book describes the horrifying story of the colonization of the Congo and the human rights movement that sprang up in response.


This book tells the story of 1854 London and the cholera epidemic. Physician John Snow created a map of the victims to show that cholera was spread through water.

A History of God: The 4,000 Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam by Karen Armstrong

Armstrong traces the history of human thought about God in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, from the Babylonian creation myth to the present day.

Biography and Memoir

Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China by Jung Chang

Chang tells the stories of herself, her mother, and her grandmother as they navigated the cultural and political changes in China during the 20th century. Her grandmother was sold to a warlord as a concubine. Her mother fought for communism, and then was denounced during the Cultural Revolution. Chang describes her experiences as a child under Mao until she became disillusioned and left the country.

Jackie Robinson: A Biography by Arnold R Amanda

A well-researched biography of the man who broke the color barrier in major league baseball in 1947.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

The controversial Black leader of the 1960s recounts his life and involvement in the Nation of Islam in this classic book.

The Complete Maus: A Survivor’s Tale by Art Spiegelman

In these groundbreaking graphic novels about the Holocaust, Spiegelman tells the story of his father, a concentration camp survivor.

First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers by Loung Ung
Biography and Memoir, cont.

The terrible and true story of a young girl who witnessed, and survived, the atrocities of Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge regime in the late 1970s.

The Bookseller of Kabul by Asne Seierstad
This is the story of Sultan Khan, a bookseller in Afghanistan. Seierstad tells the story of his business through changing regimes and his family’s experiences in a changing Afghanistan.

They Poured Fire On Us From the Sky: The Story of Three Lost Boys From Sudan
Benjamin, Alepho, and Benson are three of the “lost boys,” boys who were displaced by the war in Sudan. This book documents their experiences as they were forced to flee their village, travelled through a war-torn country, and eventually found their way to America.

The Complete Persopolis by Marjane Satrapi
This is a memoir in the form of a graphic novel. Satrapi describes her life as an Iranian during the Islamic Revolution.

Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism by Temple Grandin
Temple Grandin, PhD., describes her life as a person with autism and her important and influential work as an animal scientist.

The Intern Blues: The Timeless Classic About the Making of a Doctor by Robert Marion
The Intern Blues tells the story of three interns and their real-life trials and triumphs. The preface to the second edition describes medical training in the U.S. today and reveals where the three interns are now.

Economics

Freakonomics: A Rouge Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner
Economist Stephen D. Levitt examines the economic factors for why our world is the way it is. He analyzes everything from drug dealers to baby names, and comes to some surprising conclusions.

Microtrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow’s Big Trends by Mark J. Penn and E. Keynes Zalesne
Penn looks at the growing sub-groups of our society, such as soccer moms and extreme commuters, and the effect the “niching” of our society has on the world and our lives.

Naked Economics: Undressing the Dismal Science by Charles Wheelan
So what’s the deal with the fed and the interest rate? This book goes through the economic principles everyone should know in
**Economics**

words everyone can understand.
Lords of Finance: The Bankers Who Broke the World by Liaquat Ahamed
What was the root cause of the Great Depression? Ahamed argues that it was the result of the actions of the major bankers of the time. His discussion is highly relevant to our world today.
All the Devils are here: The Hidden History of the Financial Crisis by Bethany McLean and Joe Nocera
McLean and Nocera argue that the current economic crisis was not the result of any single thing but a combination of multiple factors.
Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins.
Can businesses and the environment coexist? The authors argue for “natural capitalism,” in which businesses are more efficient and more profitable.
How do supply, demand, and emotion affect how much we pay?
The Wal-Mart Effect: How the World’s Most Powerful Company Really Works—and How It’s Transforming the American Economy by Charles Fishman
A behind-the-scenes look at the company that has dramatically re-shaped the American economy.

**Politics and the Media**

Our Patchwork Nation: The Surprising Truth about the “Real” America by Dante Chinni and James Gimpel
Red state or blue state? The authors argue that our society is a lot more complex than that.
Everything is Broken: A tale of Catastrophe in Burma by Emma Larkin
In 2008, a deadly cyclone hit Burma, but the ruling generals refused to allow international aid into the country. This book details how the political system in Burma led to a disaster after the disaster.
The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education by Diane Ravitch
Diane Ravitch, former assistant secretary of education, analyzes the current state of education in America and suggests ways to improve our schools.
Politics and the Media, cont.

The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care

Journalist T.S. Reid got his shoulder treated... at hospitals all over the world. He writes about his experiences in these different health care systems and how these systems work, all while searching for solutions for America’s health care woes.

The Origins of Totalitarianism by Hannah Arendt

The classic analysis of totalitarian political movements, as relevant today as when it was first published.

A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide by Samantha Power

Armenia, Europe, Cambodia, Iraq, Rwanda, and Bosnia have hosted their own versions of hell in the past 100 years. Power analyzes America’s pattern of not interfering during genocide.

Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media: by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky

Ever wonder how corporate media outlets shape, spin and filter news content in service to particular political interests? This book takes a stab at answering the question from an anarcho-leftist perspective.

Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide by Harry Jenkins

A classic in information studies. Jenkins argues that new, interactive media will not replace old media but interact with it in unexpected ways, like the fan sites that spring up around television shows.

Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists by Joel Best

They’re shocking! They’re headline-grabbing! They’re... wrong. Best examines how statistics can be used, whether deliberately or not, to mislead.

Sociology and Anthropology

Salt: A World History by Mark Kurlansky

This rather bland food item is a life-sustaining necessity. Without salt as a preservative, humans could not have embarked on epic explorations of continents and oceans. Salt has played a pivotal role in economic trade, territorial wars, and the death rituals of several cultures.

Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why it’s so Hard to Think Straight About Animals by Hal Herzog

An introduction to anthrozoology: the science of human-animal relations. Herzog explores how psychology and culture affect our attitudes toward animals.
Sociology and Anthropology, cont.

Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies by Jared Diamond

In this Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Jared Diamond explores why Europeans had the material goods and technology to conquer the world. He makes a strong case that environment and geography—not race—account for European dominance.

From Every End of this Earth: 13 Families and the Lives They Made in America by Steven J. Roberts

This book looks at immigration to America through the stories of thirteen families.

Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal by Eric Schlosser

This book turns the fast food industry upside down with a hard-hitting investigation of the industry’s ecological and economic aspects.

The World is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century by Thomas Friedman

A case for how corporations and individuals are becoming more connected in the twenty-first century due to the Internet, fiber-optic networks and collaborative software and what we need to consider about how these changes are affecting our lives.

Strangers at the Gates: New Immigrants in Urban America by Roger Waldinger

Waldinger’s assembled collection of essays on the status and outlook of modern immigrants discusses both the sociology and the economics of urban first and second generation Americans.

The Meaning of Sports by Michael Mindelbaum

The Meaning of Sports includes both historical information on the development of the most popular American sports and social analysis of what each sport has reflected about American society.

The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference by Malcolm Gladwell

Why is it that just when you think you’re on the cutting edge of fashion everyone else starts wearing the same thing? The fashion has reached a tipping point. Read how trends and behaviors germinate and spread.

Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash by Elizabeth Royte

Elizabeth Royte follows our trash from when it is discarded to the sometimes unexpected places it ends up.

The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things: Crime, Drugs, Minorities, Teen Moms, Killer Kids, Mutant Microbes, Plane Crashes, Road Rage, & So Much More by Barry Glassner

Is the world more dangerous than it used to be? Glassner argues that it is our perception of danger that has increased, not the actual danger.

Carnet de Voyage by Craig Thompson

A travelogue and sketchbook documenting Craig Thompson’s travels in Barcelona, France, Morocco, and the Alps.
Psychology

Forty Studies that Changed Psychology: Explorations into the History of Psychological Research by Roger Hock

This unique book discusses 40 studies, many controversial in their day, that changed psychology and expanded our knowledge of human behavior.


Psychologist Bloom’s account of human nature contends that people are natural-born dualists and discusses how we divide the world into physical objects and mental states and how this leads to such uniquely human traits as humor, disgust, religion, art and morality.

Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives – How Your Friends’ Friends’ Friends Affect Everything You Feel, Think, and Do by Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler

The authors discuss how social networks form and influence everything including our tastes, our happiness, and even our weight.

The Invisible Gorilla: How Our Intuitions Deceive Us by Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons

This book is all about how your brain can get you into trouble. Psychologists Chabris and Simons explore everyday illusions, such as how people have a tendency not to notice things they don’t expect to see, even if those things are happening right in front of them.

The Taste of Sweet: Our Complicated Love Affair With Our Favorite Treats by Joanne Chen

Chen explores the psychological, cultural, and scientific factors of our love of the sweet.

How We Decide by Jonah Lehrer

Are good decisions strictly rational or emotional? Lehrer looks at the latest research in neuroscience, which suggests the best decisions are a blend of the two.

Mistakes Were Made (But Not By Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson

Why don’t people take responsibility for mistakes? Tavris and Aronson argue that the brain is wired for self-justification. We aren’t just creating stories that absolve us of fault in the eyes of others, we create them for ourselves.