

# WHAT DEANS ARE READING

## *for pleasure*

**36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction,** *Rebecca Goldstein*

**Adapt: Why Success Always Starts with Failure,** *Tim Harford*

**American Dreamer: A Life of Henry F. Wallace,** *John C. Culver and John Hyde*

Wallace was Ag secretary under FDR and Vice President during FDR's third term. He's a true idealist, first person to hybridize corn, interested in economics, international affairs, a Renaissance man, in short.

**Benjamin Franklin: An American Life,** *Walter Isaacson*

**Bossypants,** *Tina Fey*

Besides being very funny, an engaging description of a career trajectory that peaks at the same time Tina Fey has a baby, and how difficult that is.

**Brain Gain: Tehcnology and the Quest for Digital Wisdom,** *Marc Prensky*

**Civilization: The West and the Rest,** *Niall Ferguson*

**Clay's Quilt and A Parchment of Leaves,** *Silas House*

House writes fiction about characters in eastern Kentucky in the mountains.

**Cloud Atlas,** *David Mitchell*

The many points of view are at first bewildering—but they add up to a wonderfully imaginative portrait of a world in collapse. And yet there's hope at the end, due to the invincibility of the human spirit!

**The Coffins of Little Hope,** *Timothy Schaffert*

Schaffert is an assistant professor at University of Nebraska Lincon. To quote the Washington Post Review: "Charm buzzes all around Timothy Schaffert's new novel, but don't be fooled. It's the story of a steadfast, multi-generational family in a small Nebraska town . . . that just happens to be obsessed with death and missing children. **The Coffins of Little Hope** is like an Edward Gorey cartoon stitched in pastel needlepoint."

**Creativity: Flow and Psychology of Discovery and Invention,** *Mihaly Csikszentmihaly*

As administrators, it is easy to lose sight of the need for downtime and intensive investigation. This book is a reminder of why we entered academic life in the first place.

**Cronkite,** *Douglas G. Brinkley*

TV news and I grew up together. This book was like reading a chronicle of the major events of the first 30 years of my life.

**Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine, and the Murder of a President,** *Candice Millard*

Great book about nineteenth-century medicine and the assassination of James Garfield

**The Disappearing Spoon,** *Sam Kean*

A series of short vignettes that focus on the periodic table, but not necessarily from a chemist's perspective.

**Enrique's Journey,** *Sonia Nazario*

Recounts a true story of a boy's journey from Honduras to South Carolina in search of his mother, who left eleven years prior to work in the U.S. so she could send money back for his education and livelihood. Nazario's account of the tenacity of the human spirit touched me deeply and broadened my understanding of the struggles individuals from other cultures and countries encounter daily.

**Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation,** *Joseph Ellis*

**Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and the Race of a Lifetime,** *John Heilemann and Mark Halperin*

It is interesting to read this account of the 2008 race as we move into the 2012 election. The book is so much more than the watery HBO movie.

**Heart of Darkness,** *Joseph Conrad*

**High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America,** *Jessica B. Harris*

**The Hobbit,** *J. R.R. Tolkien*

Gandalf is the Dean, of course. He gets everything stirred up and runs off, leaving a bunch of clueless faculty to take care of themselves. This, of course, provides a chance for professional development wherein previously uninvolved faculty (i.e. the Hobbit) must find leadership qualities within themselves. Smaug would represent state legislatures, Goblins the Tea party, trolls would be prima-donna senior faculty, and so forth. I've not quite figured out the elves yet.

**Hunger Games,** *Suzanne Collins*

**The Idiot,** *Fyodor Dostoyevsky*

**Intellect,** *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**Intern Nation: How to Earn NOTHING and Little in the Brave New Economy,** *Ross Perlin*

**In the Garden of Beasts,** *Erik Larson*

**Jihad and Genocide,** *Richard L. Rubenstein*

**Life**, Keith Richards and James Fox

**Los Alamos**, Joseph Kanon

**More Than Freedom: Fighting For Black Citizenship In A White Republic 1829-1889**, Stephen Kantrowitz

**The Night Circus**, Erin Morgenstern

**Outliers**, Malcolm Gladwell

Outliers talks about the unseen forces and circumstances that lead to the success or failure of individuals – we don't really ever lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps.

**The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson**, Robert A. Caro

**The Philosophical Breakfast Club: Four Remarkable Friends Who Transformed Science and Changed the World**, Laura J. Snyder

Describes how the friendship among William Whewell, John Herschel, Charles Babbage, and Richard Jones shaped the development of British science in the 19th century

**Porch Lights**, Dorothea Benton Frank

Dottie Frank's books are set primarily in the low country of South Carolina – my home. Her novels are pure pleasure and allow me to escape to a place and time that comforts me, with well-developed characters and settings that ring true.

**The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York**, Robert A. Caro

**Revolution 2.0: The Power of People is Greater Than the People in Power: A Memoir**, Wael Ghonim

Actually the summer reading selection for my campus, but I enjoyed this accessible and engaging book despite its flaws. It made its way into numerous conversations with friends, family, students and colleagues due to its relevance to current events in Egypt and Syria, and big questions regarding tyranny and freedom in our world today (not to mention social networking technology).

**Scoreboard, Baby: A Story of College Football, Crime, and Complicity**, Ken Armstrong and Nick Perry

Disturbing and enlightening. My academic area is Physical Education and I have always had an interest in college sports. This book chronicles the dark side of Division 1 football at the University of Washington. It is almost like the college version of "Friday Night Lights."

**Sea of Poppies**, and **River of Smoke**, Amal Ghosh

Two extraordinary historical novels.

**In the Shadow of the Banyan**, Vaddey Ratner

Although a work of fiction, it is based on the author's experiences growing up in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime (mid to late 70s). It has gotten remarkable reviews from diverse publications (e.g., NPR and People magazine).

**The Sisters Brothers**, Patrick deWitt

A wonderfully funny novel. If the Coen brothers (O Brother Where Art Thou?) wrote a western, this would be it.

**Sixkill**, Robert Parker and Robert B. Parker's **Lullaby**, Ace Atkins.

**Lullaby** and **Sixkill** are detective novels featuring Boston private eye Spencer (we never find out his real name).

**Steve Jobs**, Walter Isaacson

**St. Francis of Assisi**, G.K. Chesterton

**Solar**, Ian McKeon

**Song of Solomon; Home**, Toni Morrison

Great fiction by one of our greatest writers.

**Straight Man**, Richard Russo

**Straight Man** is a hilarious novel about the politics of academia and the tenure process.

**The Swerve: How the World Became Modern**, Steven Greenblatt

Chronicles the impact of the re-discovery of the Lucretius' **On the Nature of Things** on Renaissance thought and the emergence of the modern world.

**A Thousand Splendid Suns**, Khalid Hosseini

Wonderful, bittersweet story

**Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit**, Barry Estabrook

It's a very disturbing look at what goes into producing the vast majority of tomatoes consumed by Americans from late fall through early spring. The deluge of pesticides combined with repeated convictions for using slave labor are enough to stop anyone from eating a winter tomato.

**Warmth of Other Suns**, Isabel Wilkerson

**Wolf Hall**, Hilary Mantel

Beautifully written, a story of power and corruption, as well as a story of the power of women (whether the men in the story realize it or not!)

SERIES:

*Hakan Nesser's* **Inspector Van Veeteren** detective series

**Matthew Shardlake** series, *C.J. Sansom* (historical mysteries)

**Garnethill Trilogy** detective series, *Denise Mina*

**Dublin Murder Squad** series, *Tana French*

*Alexander McCall Smith* (who wrote the **No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency** series) has another set called the **Isabel Dalhousie Series** (first is **The Sunday Philosophy Club**) about an independent philosopher and journal editor living in Scotland with a wicked eye for academic pretense.

The **Tess Monaghan** series, *Laura Lippman*

I love mystery series with female protagonists. This series is my latest "discovery," which are set in and around Baltimore. The first in the series is **Baltimore Blues**. All are well-written, engaging and distracting – my criteria for a guilty pleasure read.