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- HOME
- ABOUT US
- THE SCREECH PODCAST
- CAMPUS LIFE
- OUTSIDE THE BUBBLE
- ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT
- OPINION
- AUDIO/VISUAL

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 under Arts & Entertainment
 tagged books, summer
 reading
 Permalink

SUMMER READING RECOMMENDATIONS – PART 3



Photo by Holly Hollopeter

By Jady Elias

This is part three of a series of summer book recommendations from professors around campus. Check out [part 1](#) and [part 2](#) if you missed them!

Professor Chrystal Helmcke

"Because of Winn Dixie" by Kate DiCamillo

"The summer Opal and her father, the preacher, move to Naomi, Florida. Opal goes into the Winn-Dixie supermarket and comes out with a dog...whom she dubs Winn-Dixie. Because of Winn-Dixie, Opal learns ten things about her absent mother, one for each year Opal has been alive. Throughout the summer, Winn Dixie and Opal meet the local librarian, Miss Franny Block Gloria Dump (who is nearly blind but sees with her heart), and Otis (an ex-con who sets the animals in his pet shop loose after hours, then lulls them with his guitar). Opal's life is forever changed by Winn Dixie and their adventures together," said Helmcke.

"The Tale of Despereaux" by Kate DiCamillo

"This is a story about Despereaux Lilling, a mouse who is in love with music, stories, and a princess named Pea. It's also the story of a rat called Roscuro, who lives in the darkness and covets a world filled with light. And it is the story of Miggery Sow, a slow-witted serving girl who harbors a simple, impossible wish. These three characters are about to embark on a journey that will lead them down into a horrible dungeon, up into a glittering castle, and, ultimately, into each other's lives," said Helmcke.

"These books both explore themes of love and loss, and are sweet, simple (but not 'easy') invitations to reflect on the power of love to change the world," said Helmcke.

"1000 Gifts" by Anne Voskamp

"This book is a memoir, a reflection, an encouragement and a challenge. When a friend gently suggests to Anne that embracing gratitude might be a way forward and out of her grief and despair, Anne decides to attempt a list of 1000 things for which she is thankful. In this book she shares her pain and her joy as God reshapes her heart. Quite honestly, I found the book a bit hard at first, but soon after I got a couple of chapters in, I was hooked deeply. So whenever I recommend it, I urge readers to keep going even if the first few chapters don't immediately capture their attention," said Helmcke.

Dr. Joshua Meeks

"A Sand County Almanac" by Aldo Leopold

A collection of essays by Aldo Leopold detailing the splendor of the untouched American frontier. He discusses the environmental impact of humans on natural resources and makes a strong case for the protection of our planet.

"A Sand County Almanac is a classic of environmental literature. Leopold's collection of essays are both powerful and easy to read, articulating a conservation ethic rooted in experience and spirituality. The opening line to the Foreword encapsulates the book wonderfully: 'There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot.' I especially recommend the essays 'Good Oak' and 'Thinking Like a Mountain,'" said Meeks.

Professor Nick Steinloski

"A Flexible Faith" by Bonnie Kristian

In the Christian faith it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that our particular Christian tradition is the only right way to practice faith. Kristian argues that the diversity of faith in the Christian orthodoxy is a strength, not a weakness. She outlines several difficult topics and discusses how we can disagree but continue to live courageously in community.

"The reason I chose this book is that it is a simple read about what it means to follow Jesus in our culture today. It unpacks in easily understandable chapters important theological topics we need to be discussing today. Each chapter includes an introduction to a theologian, resources to learn more about the topic covered, and a short Q&A from current ministry leaders, theologians, and denominational leaders," said Steinloski.

Dr. Danette Ver Woert

"Deep Work" by Cal Newport

In a world where distractions abound, many of us have lost the ability to do "deep work:" focusing with no distractions to get more quality work done in a shorter amount of time. While he says distractions aren't all bad, Newport focuses on retraining the brain to stay focused and motivated in the deep work space.

"My all time favorite book of 2018, I have read and re-read this book. Newport gives really great advice about how to manage time in a digitally-saturated world. I use his practices in my personal life and work life. He has a Ted Talk called 'Quit Social Media' that initially drew me to his work. He makes a case for working deeply, as opposed to surface-level, distracted efforts!" said Ver Woert.

"Boundaries" by Henry Cloud & John Townsend

Cloud and Townsend focus on how to bravely set healthy boundaries in all relationships while still being a loving person. If you have trouble saying no, or you fear that you'll hurt other people's feelings if you prioritize yourself, this is the perfect book for you.

"Favorite book of 2019! I have already listened to the audiobook twice! This book gave me so much language for the necessity for intentional emotional, relational, and financial boundaries," said Ver Woert.

"The Book of Joy" by Desmond Tutu and Dalai Lama

"Another fabulous audiobook (accents included). Tutu and the Dalai Lama have a 'best friends retreat' and talk about joy for a whole month, and many of their conversations are documented in this book. The book also has the practical that I could apply to

weekend, and many of their conversations are documented verbatim in this book. The book also has joy practices that I could apply in my own life, like 'setting a morning intention,'" said Ver Woert.

Dr. Joshua Ziefle

"The Singer" by Calvin Miller

"A poetic retelling of the life of Jesus in the mythic tradition. Beautiful and thoughtful, with short chapters that make great devotional material," said Ziefle.

Science Fiction. "The Sparrow" by Mary Doria Russell

"In a not too distant future, evidence of alien life is found. Who leads the expedition to the new planet? The Catholic Church, of course. Fascinating and deeply provocative, this book was devastating to me...in a good way (Warning: some traumatic and troubling content)," said Ziefle.

"Team of Rivals" by Doris Kearns Goodwin

"Ever wondered why Abraham Lincoln was so great? Here is an interesting history of his complicated leadership team that explains one reason why! A worthy read and a good chance to think about our nation's 16th President and our own lives as well," said Ziefle.

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