

Choices for Non-Fiction book for November 8 2026

The book for October 4 is *Chokepoints: American Power in the Age of Economic Warfare* by Edward Fishman. One of these books will become the selection for our November meeting:

1. **Regenesi: Feeding the World Without Devouring the Planet** by George Monbiot (Bruce) (2022) An exploration of advances in soil ecology and new food technologies that promise to feed the world without destroying it. Monbiot introduces innovators revolutionizing soil fertility and pioneering new ways to grow protein and fat, liberating land from plows and chemicals.
2. **Humankind: A Hopeful History** by Rutger Bregman (Bruce) (2019) An argument, drawing on history, psychology, and anthropology, that most people are fundamentally decent and that cynicism about human nature is both mistaken and self-fulfilling. Bregman revisits famous cases, from the Stanford prison experiment to the shipwrecked Tongan boys who behaved nothing like the characters in *Lord of the Flies*, to show that cooperation rather than cruelty is the human default.
3. **Last Boat Out of Shanghai: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Fled Mao's Revolution** by Helen Zia (Jim B) (2019) A dramatic narrative history following four young people swept up in the mass exodus from Shanghai after Mao's 1949 Communist takeover. Zia details how roughly a million residents fled the cosmopolitan city, drawing on scores of interviews to trace individual journeys of survival, displacement, and reinvention.
4. **The Backsliders: Why Leaders Undermine Their Own Democracies** by Susan C. Stokes (Peter R) (2025) An examination of why some two dozen elected presidents and prime ministers since 2000 have attacked the democratic institutions they were entrusted to protect. Stokes details how rising income inequality leaves countries vulnerable to erosion, and how backsliding leaders sustain popular support by polarizing citizens and disparaging the institutions they target.
5. **The U.S. Constitution: A Comprehensive and Annotated Guide for the Modern Reader** by Melissa Murray (Jim B) (2026) An annotated edition of the Constitution written for general readers rather than lawyers. Murray, a constitutional law scholar and co-host of the podcast *Strict Scrutiny*, works through the document provision by provision, supplying historical context and examples of how each bears on present-day disputes.
6. **Proto: How One Ancient Language Went Global** by Laura Spinney (Sam P) (2025) A sweeping account of Proto-Indo-European, the vanished mother tongue from which languages spoken from Iceland to India descend. Spinney details how linguistics, archaeology, and genetics have combined to trace the language's origins on the Eurasian steppe and its spread across continents and millennia.
7. **Love, War, and Diplomacy: The Discovery of the Amarna Letters and the Bronze Age World They Revealed** by Eric Cline (Peter R) (2025) An account of the nearly four hundred cuneiform tablets unearthed in 1887 at Akhenaten's abandoned capital, the only royal archive known from New Kingdom Egypt. Cline details the scramble among dealers and museums to acquire them and the world of royal marriages, gift-giving, and intrigue they disclose.
8. **Irrational Exuberance** by Robert J. Shiller (Fernando) (2000) A skeptical analysis of speculative bubbles, published as the dot-com market peaked, arguing that asset prices are driven by psychology and herd behavior rather than sober valuation. Shiller details the structural, cultural, and psychological forces that inflate markets and proposes policy changes to blunt the damage when they deflate.
9. **We the People: A History of the U.S. Constitution** by Jill Lepore (Jim B) (2025) A Pulitzer Prize-winning history recasting the Constitution as a document the framers expected future generations to amend rather than preserve unchanged. Drawing on an archive of every major proposed amendment, Lepore recovers the many Americans who sought to mend the country by rewriting its basic law.
10. **Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World** by Adam Tooze (Abby) (2018) A global history of the 2008 financial crisis and the decade of aftershocks that followed it, from Wall Street to the eurozone to Ukraine. Tooze details how the emergency measures taken by central banks reshaped the world economy and fed the political upheavals that came after.

The following is the overflow list of books. Those that do well will propagate to the top ten list when we meet again.

11. **The End of Gender: Debunking the Myths about Sex and Identity in Our Society** by Debra Soh (Bruce) (2020) A neuroscientist and sexologist's account of what research says about biological sex, gender identity, and the brain. Soh challenges the claim that gender is purely a social construct and takes up contested questions such as gender-neutral parenting and gender dysphoria in children.
12. **No Prophets: The Fight to Save Democracy from Christian Nationalism** by Jared Huffman (Carolyn) (2026) An insider's account from the North Bay congressman, the only self-described humanist in Congress, of the Christian nationalist movement's growing hold on federal power. Huffman profiles the factions driving it, traces its rise from the Reagan era to the present, and calls for an interfaith coalition to defend the separation of church and state.
13. **Morbid: Debunking Modern Longevity Science** by Saul J. Newman (Peter R) (2026) A skeptical audit of aging research by a scientist who argues that much of it rests on bad records, weak methods, and marketing. Newman takes apart celebrated centenarian claims and the Blue Zones and contends that the field has drifted from science toward salesmanship.
14. **The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War** by Ben Macintyre (Kirsten) (2018) The story of Oleg Gordievsky, the KGB officer who spied for Britain for more than a decade and rose to head the KGB's London station. Macintyre details his recruitment, the intelligence he passed during the tensest years of the Cold War, and his 1985 escape across the Finnish border after CIA officer Aldrich Ames betrayed him.
15. **I Am Not a Robot: My Year Using AI to Do (Almost) Everything** by Joanna Stern (Jim B) (2026) The Wall Street Journal technology columnist's account of a year spent handing as much of her life as possible, from driving to vacation planning to health decisions, to AI tools. Stern weighs the industry's marketing claims against what the technology can actually do, with interviews of its leading figures along the way.
16. **The World's Worst Bet: How the Globalization Gamble Went Wrong (And What Would Make It Right)** by David J. Lynch (Peter R) (2025) A history of the American embrace of globalization from the 1990s onward and the case that Washington gambled it could enjoy the gains while ignoring the costs. Lynch, a Washington Post economics reporter, follows policymakers and displaced factory workers through lost manufacturing jobs, fragile supply chains, and China's rise, and proposes ways to keep trade's benefits while spreading them more widely.
17. **Gilded Rage: Elon Musk and the Radicalization of Silicon Valley** by Jacob Silverman (Kirsten) (2025) An account of how Elon Musk and a cohort of Silicon Valley billionaires moved from libertarian-leaning politics to open hostility toward democratic institutions. Silverman traces the money, grievances, and networks behind the shift and what the group intends to do with its power.
18. **Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party** by Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr. (Fernando) (2013) A comprehensive history of the Black Panther Party from its founding in Oakland in 1966 through its rise and decline. Bloom and Martin treat the Panthers as a serious political force, examining the party's ideology, its confrontations with police and the FBI, and its organizing in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and New Haven.
19. **A World Appears: A Journey into Consciousness** by Michael Pollan (Peter R) (2026) An inquiry into what consciousness is, who has it, and how subjective experience arises from the brain, drawing on neuroscience, philosophy, and psychedelic research. Pollan interviews researchers working at the field's edges, from studies of awareness in plants to attempts to build feeling into AI, and asks what the answers imply for how we treat animals, ecosystems, and machines.
20. **The Nerd Reich: Silicon Valley Fascism and the War on Democracy** by Gil Durán (Alice F) (2026) An argument that a group of tech billionaires including Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, and Marc Andreessen has moved from seeking wealth to seeking political control, guided by thinkers such as Curtis Yarvin. Durán details the ideas behind network states and CEO-style government and concludes that the country must choose between billionaires and democracy.