

ISSUES

KRAMER

OUTSIDE READING ASSIGNMENT

A thorough examination of all of the complexities of the various issues that we study cannot come solely from articles, films, classroom activities, and other outside experiences. In order to have a greater sense of the multiple perspectives involved as well as the level of depth and expertise necessary to fully formulate your arguments, you need to have in-depth experiences with rich, non-fiction texts. During this semester, you will choose a book for outside reading, discussion, and writing. You will read the book on your own and then engage in thinking, reflection and hopefully dialogue about your readings.

Instructions:

Step One - Select your book - Book in hand (DUE February 9)

- Read through the descriptions of the books below
- Look through Amazon books reviews
- If you borrow a book from the library, I recommend reading with post-it notes to mark quotes and passages.
- If you would like to highlight and annotate, used bookstores can be a good option.

As you read your book, look for and make a note of:

- *Quotes that strike you as powerful*
- *Scenes that connect to idea/concepts/topics we have discussed in class*
- *Parts of the book in which you have an emotional connection*

Step Two - Read the first half of the book - DUE: March 22, 2024

- Carefully read the first half of the book
- Go to the ARC for a book talk no later than 3/22

How to Arrange a Conference with the ARC for your Book Talk

- ARC Humanities has a new online appointment scheduling system. Students can now make their own appointments.
- Go to: deerfield.mywconline.com
- Create an account.
- Go to the schedule. Click on any open appointment and sign up by completing the pop up form.
- The link for the zoom meeting will be in the confirmation email.

ARC Hours - M/LS 10:10 - 4:15,
 T/W/TH 8:15 - 4:15,
 F 8:15 - 3:15

Step Three - Complete the book - DUE: Thu. May. 9 or 10

- Bring the book to class for an in-class writing.

Book Options 2023-2024

Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town by Jon Krakauer

From bestselling author Jon Krakauer, a stark, powerful, meticulously reported narrative about a series of sexual assaults at the University of Montana — stories that illuminate the human drama behind the national plague of campus rape

Missoula, Montana, is a typical college town, with a highly regarded state university, bucolic surroundings, a lively social scene, and an excellent football team — the Grizzlies — with a rabid fan base. The Department of Justice investigated 350 sexual assaults reported to the Missoula police between January 2008 and May 2012. Few of these assaults were properly handled by either the university or local authorities. In this, Missoula is also typical.

A DOJ report released in December of 2014 estimates 110,000 women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four are raped each year. Krakauer's devastating narrative of what happened in Missoula makes clear why rape is so prevalent on American campuses, and why rape victims are so reluctant to report assault. Acquaintance rape is a crime like no other. Unlike burglary or embezzlement or any other felony, the victim often comes under more suspicion than the alleged perpetrator. This is especially true if the victim is sexually active; if she had been drinking prior to the assault — and if the man she accuses plays on a popular sports team. The vanishingly small but highly publicized incidents of false accusations are often used to dismiss her claims in the press. If the case goes to trial, the woman's entire personal life becomes fair game for defense attorneys.

This brutal reality goes a long way towards explaining why acquaintance rape is the most underreported crime in America. In addition to physical trauma, its victims often suffer devastating psychological damage that leads to feelings of shame, emotional paralysis and stigmatization. PTSD rates for rape victims are estimated to be 50%, higher than soldiers returning from war.

In Missoula, Krakauer chronicles the searing experiences of several women in Missoula — the nights when they were raped; their fear and self-doubt in the aftermath; the way they were treated by the police, prosecutors, defense attorneys; the public vilification and private anguish; their bravery in pushing forward and what it cost them.

Some of them went to the police. Some declined to go to the police, or to press charges, but sought redress from the university, which has its own, non-criminal judicial process when a student is accused of rape. In two cases the police agreed to press charges and the district attorney agreed to prosecute. One case led to a conviction; one to an acquittal. Those women courageous enough to press charges or to speak publicly about their experiences were attacked in the media, on Grizzly football fan sites, and/or to their faces. The university expelled three of the accused rapists, but one was reinstated by state officials in a secret proceeding. One district attorney testified for an alleged rapist at his university hearing. She later left the prosecutor's office and successfully defended the Grizzlies' star quarterback in his rape trial. The horror of being raped, in each woman's case, was magnified by the mechanics of the justice system and the reaction of the community.

Krakauer's dispassionate, carefully documented account of what these women endured cuts through the abstract ideological debate about campus rape. College-age women are not raped because they are promiscuous, or drunk, or send mixed signals, or feel guilty about casual sex, or seek attention. They are the victims of a terrible crime and deserving of compassion from society and fairness from a justice system that is clearly broken.

Asking for It: The Alarming Rise of Rape Culture--and What We Can Do about It by Kate Harding

In the era of #metoo, a clear-eyed, sharp look at rape culture, sexual assault, harassment and violence against women--and what we can do about it.

"A timely and brilliant book." (Jessica Valenti)

Every seven minutes, someone in America commits a rape. And whether that's a football star, beloved celebrity, elected official, member of the clergy, or just an average Joe (or Joanna), there's probably a community eager to make excuses for that person.

In Asking for It, Kate Harding combines in-depth research with a frank, no-holds-barred voice to make the case that twenty-first-century America supports rapists more effectively than it supports victims. From institutional failures in higher education to real-world examples of rape culture, Harding offers ideas and suggestions for how we, as a society, can take sexual violence much more seriously without compromising the rights of the accused.

I Have the Right To: A High School Survivor's Story of Sexual Assault, Justice, and Hope by Chessy Prout

A young survivor tells her searing, visceral story of sexual assault, justice, and healing in this gutwrenching memoir.

The numbers are staggering: nearly one in five girls ages fourteen to seventeen have been the victim of a sexual assault or attempted sexual assault. This is the true story of one of those girls.

In 2014, Chessy Prout was a freshman at St. Paul's School, a prestigious boarding school in New Hampshire, when a senior boy sexually assaulted her as part of a ritualized game of conquest. Chessy bravely reported her assault to the police and testified against her attacker in court. Then, in the face of unexpected backlash from her once-trusted school community, she shed her anonymity to help other survivors find their voice.

This memoir is more than an account of a horrific event. It takes a magnifying glass to the institutions that turn a blind eye to such behavior and a society that blames victims rather than perpetrators. Chessy's story offers real, powerful solutions to upend rape culture as we know it today. Prepare to be inspired by this remarkable young woman and her story of survival, advocacy, and hope in the face of unspeakable trauma.

Everyday Sexism by Laura Bates

The Everyday Sexism Project was founded by writer and activist Laura Bates in April 2012. It began life as a website where people could share their experiences of daily, normalized sexism, from street harassment to workplace discrimination to sexual assault and rape.

The Project became a viral sensation, attracting international press attention from The New York Times to French Glamour; Grazia South Africa, to the Times of India and support from celebrities such as Rose McGowan, Amanda Palmer, Mara Wilson, Ashley Judd, James Corden, Simon Pegg, and many others. The project has now collected over 100,000 testimonies from people around the world and launched new branches in 25 countries worldwide. The project has been credited with helping to spark a new wave of feminism.

A Mother's Reckoning: Living in the Aftermath of Tragedy by Sue Klebold

The acclaimed New York Times bestseller by Sue Klebold, mother of one of the Columbine shooters, about living in the aftermath of Columbine.

On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold walked into Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Over the course of minutes, they would kill twelve students and a teacher and wound twenty-four others before taking their own lives. For the last sixteen years, Sue Klebold, Dylan's mother, has lived with the indescribable grief and shame of that day. How could her child, the promising young man she had loved and raised, be responsible for such horror? And how, as his mother, had she not known something was wrong? Were there subtle signs she had missed? What, if anything, could she have done differently?

These are questions that Klebold has grappled with every day since the Columbine tragedy. In A Mother's Reckoning, she chronicles with unflinching honesty her journey as a mother trying to come to terms with the incomprehensible. In the hope that the insights and understanding she has gained may help other families recognize when a child is in distress, she tells her story in full, drawing upon her personal

journals, the videos and writings that Dylan left behind, and on countless interviews with mental health experts.

*Filled with hard-won wisdom and compassion, **A Mother's Reckoning** is a powerful and haunting book that sheds light on one of the most pressing issues of our time. And with fresh wounds from the Newtown and Charleston shootings, never has the need for understanding been more urgent.*

All author profits from the book will be donated to research and to charitable organizations focusing on mental health issues.

Parkland: Birth of a Movement 1st Edition by Dave Cullen

On the first anniversary of the events at Parkland, the acclaimed, New York Times bestselling author of Columbine offers an intimate, deeply moving account of the extraordinary teenage survivors who became activists and pushed back against the NRA and feckless Congressional leaders—inspiring millions of Americans to join their grassroots #neveragain movement.

Nineteen years ago, Dave Cullen was among the first to arrive at Columbine High, even before most of the SWAT teams went in. While writing his acclaimed account of the tragedy, he suffered two bouts of secondary PTSD. He covered all the later tragedies from a distance, working with a cadre of experts cultivated from academia and the FBI, but swore he would never return to the scene of a ghastly crime.

But in March 2018, Cullen went to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School because something radically different was happening. In nearly twenty years witnessing the mass shootings epidemic escalate, he was stunned and awed by the courage, anger, and conviction of the high school's students. Refusing to allow adults and the media to shape their story, these remarkable adolescents took control, using their grief as a catalyst for change, transforming tragedy into a movement of astonishing hope that has galvanized a nation.

Cullen unfolds the story of Parkland through the voices of key participants whose diverse personalities and outlooks comprise every facet of the movement. Instead of taking us into the minds of the killer, he takes us into the hearts of the Douglas students as they cope with the common concerns of high school students everywhere—awaiting college acceptance letters, studying for mid-term exams, competing against their athletic rivals, putting together the yearbook, staging the musical Spring Awakening, enjoying prom and graduation—while moving forward from a horrific event that has altered them forever.

Deeply researched and beautifully told, Parkland is an in-depth examination of this pivotal moment in American culture—and an up-close portrait that reveals what these extraordinary young people are like as kids. As it celebrates the passion of these astonishing students who are making history, this spellbinding book is an inspiring call to action for lasting change.

Newtown: An American Tragedy by Matthew Lysiak

A journalist for The Daily News (New York) offers a “meticulous account of the Newtown massacre and its aftermath. ...it's been a year, and this harrowing book might be a reminder that the debate needs reviving” (Kirkus Reviews).

The world mourned the devastating shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012.

We remember the numbers: twenty children and six adults, murdered in a place of nurture and trust. We remember the names: teachers like Victoria Soto, who lost her life protecting her students. A shooter named Adam Lanza. And we remember the questions: outraged conjecture instantly monopolized the worldwide response to the tragedy—while the truth went missing.

Here is the definitive journalistic account of Newtown, an essential examination of the facts—not only of that horrific day but the perfect storm of mental instability and obsession that preceded it and, in the aftermath of unspeakable heartbreak, the controversy that continues to play out on the national stage. Drawn from previously undisclosed emails, police reports, and in-depth interviews, Newtown: An American Tragedy breaks through a miasma of misinformation to present the comprehensive story that must be told—today—if we are to prevent another American tragedy in the days to come.

[The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness](#) by Michelle Alexander

Once in a great while a book comes along that changes the way we see the world and helps to fuel a nationwide social movement. The New Jim Crow is such a book. Praised by Harvard Law professor Lani Guinier as "brave and bold," this book directly challenges the notion that the election of Barack Obama signals a new era of colorblindness.

With dazzling candor, legal scholar Michelle Alexander argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." By targeting black men through the War on Drugs and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status—even as it formally adheres to the principle of colorblindness. In the words of Benjamin Todd Jealous, president and CEO of the NAACP, this book is a "call to action."

Called "stunning" by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David Levering Lewis, "invaluable" by the Daily Kos, "explosive" by Kirkus, and "profoundly necessary" by the Miami Herald, this updated and revised paperback edition of The New Jim Crow, now with a foreword by Cornel West, is a must-read for all people of conscience.

[The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace](#) by Jeff Hobbs

An instant New York Times bestseller, named a best book of the year by The New York Times Book Review, Amazon, and Entertainment Weekly, among others, this celebrated account of a young African-American man who escaped Newark, NJ, to attend Yale, but still faced the dangers of the streets when he returned is, "nuanced and shattering" (People) and "mesmeric" (The New York Times Book Review).

When author Jeff Hobbs arrived at Yale University, he became fast friends with the man who would be his college roommate for four years, Robert Peace. Robert's life was rough from the beginning in the crime-ridden streets of Newark in the 1980s, with his father in jail and his mother earning less than \$15,000 a year. But Robert was a brilliant student, and it was supposed to get easier when he was accepted to Yale, where he studied molecular biochemistry and biophysics. But it didn't get easier. Robert carried with him the difficult dual nature of his existence, trying to fit in at Yale, and at home on breaks.

A compelling and honest portrait of Robert's relationships—with his struggling mother, with his incarcerated father, with his teachers and friends—The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace encompasses the most enduring conflicts in America: race, class, drugs, community, imprisonment, education, family, friendship, and love. It's about the collision of two fiercely insular worlds—the ivy-covered campus of Yale University and the slums of Newark, New Jersey, and the difficulty of going from one to the other and then back again. It's about trying to live a decent life in America. But most all this "fresh, compelling" (The Washington Post) story is about the tragic life of one singular brilliant young man. His end, a violent one, is heartbreaking and powerful and "a haunting American tragedy for our times" (Entertainment Weekly).

White Rage: The Unspoken Truth About Our Racial Divide by Carol Anderson
From the Civil War to our combustible present, acclaimed historian Carol Anderson reframes our continuing conversation about race, chronicling the powerful forces opposed to black progress in America.

As Ferguson, Missouri, erupted in August 2014, and media commentators across the ideological spectrum referred to the angry response of African Americans as “black rage,” historian Carol Anderson wrote a remarkable op-ed in The Washington Post suggesting that this was, instead, “white rage at work. With so much attention on the flames,” she argued, “everyone had ignored the kindling.”

Since 1865 and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, every time African Americans have made advances towards full participation in our democracy, white reaction has fueled a deliberate and relentless rollback of their gains. The end of the Civil War and Reconstruction was greeted with the Black Codes and Jim Crow; the Supreme Court’s landmark 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision was met with the shutting down of public schools throughout the South while taxpayer dollars financed segregated white private schools; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 triggered a coded but powerful response, the so-called Southern Strategy and the War on Drugs that disenfranchised millions of African Americans while propelling presidents Nixon and Reagan into the White House, and then the election of America’s first black President, led to the expression of white rage that has been as relentless as it has been brutal.

Carefully linking these and other historical flashpoints when social progress for African Americans was countered by deliberate and cleverly crafted opposition, Anderson pulls back the veil that has long covered actions made in the name of protecting democracy, fiscal responsibility, or protection against fraud, rendering visible the long lineage of white rage. Compelling and dramatic in the unimpeachable history it relates, White Rage will add an important new dimension to the national conversation about race in America.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson

A powerful true story about the potential for mercy to redeem us, and a clarion call to fix our broken system of justice—from one of the most brilliant and influential lawyers of our time

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn’t commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinksmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.

Just Mercy is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer’s coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice.

Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist by Eli Saslow

From a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, the powerful story of how a prominent white supremacist changed his heart and mind

Derek Black grew up at the epicenter of white nationalism. His father founded Stormfront, the largest racist community on the Internet. His godfather, David Duke, was a KKK Grand Wizard. By the time Derek turned nineteen, he had become an elected politician with his own daily radio show - already regarded as the “the leading light” of the burgeoning white nationalist movement. “We can infiltrate,” Derek once told a crowd of white nationalists. “We can take the country back.”

Then he went to college. Derek had been home-schooled by his parents, steeped in the culture of white supremacy, and he had rarely encountered diverse perspectives or direct outrage against his beliefs. At New

College of Florida, he continued to broadcast his radio show in secret each morning, living a double life until a classmate uncovered his identity and sent an email to the entire school. "Derek Black...white supremacist, radio host...New College student???"

The ensuing uproar overtook one of the most liberal colleges in the country. Some students protested Derek's presence on campus, forcing him to reconcile for the first time with the ugliness his beliefs. Other students found the courage to reach out to him, including an Orthodox Jew who invited Derek to attend weekly Shabbat dinners. It was because of those dinners--and the wide-ranging relationships formed at that table--that Derek started to question the science, history and prejudices behind his worldview. As white nationalism infiltrated the political mainstream, Derek decided to confront the damage he had done.

Rising Out of Hatred tells the story of how white-supremacist ideas migrated from the far-right fringe to the White House through the intensely personal saga of one man who eventually disavowed everything he was taught to believe, at tremendous personal cost. With great empathy and narrative verve, Eli Saslow asks what Derek's story can tell us about America's increasingly divided nature. This is a book to help us understand the American moment and to help us better understand one another.

[12 Angry Men: True Stories of Being a Black Man in America Today](#) by Gregory S. Parks

Called a book "which is factual yet reads like a novel" by the Huffington Post, 12 Angry Men reveals some pointed truths about our nation, as a dozen eloquent authors from across the United States tell their personal stories of being racially profiled.

We hear from Joe Morgan, a former Major League Baseball MVP, who was tackled and falsely arrested at the Los Angeles airport; Paul Butler, a federal prosecutor who was detained while walking in his own neighborhood in Washington, D.C.; Kent, a devoted husband and father, hauled into central booking for trespassing and loitering when he visits his mother's housing project; Solomon Moore, a former criminal justice reporter for the New York Times, detained by the police while on assignment in North Carolina; and King Downing, former head of the ACLU's racial profiling initiative, who was himself pursued by National Guardsmen after arriving on the red-eye in Boston's Logan Airport.

A narrative of another America for men of color emerges in 12 Angry Men as "a dozen brothers are allowed to give full vent to their feelings about [an] indignity routinely suffered by the majority of African American males" and, in doing so, reveal "a serious impediment to the collective American Dream of a colorblind society" (the nationally syndicated Pittsburgh Urban Media).

[Rest in Power: The Enduring Life of Trayvon Martin](#) by Sybrina Fulton

On a February evening in 2012, in a small town in central Florida, seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was walking home with candy and a can of juice in hand and talking on the phone with a friend when a fatal encounter with a gun-wielding neighborhood watchman ended his young life. The watchman was briefly detained by the police and released. Trayvon's father—a truck driver named Tracy—tried to get answers from the police but was shut down and ignored. Trayvon's mother, a civil servant for the city of Miami, was paralyzed by the news of her son's death and lost in mourning, unable to leave her room for days. But in a matter of weeks, their son's name would be spoken by President Obama, honored by professional athletes, and passionately discussed all over traditional and social media. And at the head of a growing nationwide campaign for justice were Trayvon's parents, who—driven by their intense love for their lost son—discovered their voices, gathered allies, and launched a movement that would change the country.

Five years after his tragic death, Trayvon Martin's name is still evoked every day. He has become a symbol of social justice activism, as has his hauntingly familiar image: the photo of a child still in the process of becoming a young man, wearing a hoodie and gazing silently at the camera. But who was Trayvon Martin, before he became, in death, an icon? And how did one black child's death on a dark, rainy street in a small Florida town become the match that lit a civil rights crusade?

Rest in Power, told through the compelling alternating narratives of Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin, answers, for the first time, those questions from the most intimate of sources. It's the story of the beautiful and complex child they lost, the cruel unresponsiveness of the police and the hostility of the legal system, and the inspiring journey they took from grief and pain to power, and from tragedy and senselessness to meaning.

[White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America](#) by Margaret Hagerman

Winner, 2019 William J. Goode Book Award, given by the Family Section of the American Sociological Association

Finalist, 2019 C. Wright Mills Award, given by the Society for the Study of Social Problems

Riveting stories of how affluent, white children learn about race

American kids are living in a world of ongoing public debates about race, daily displays of racial injustice, and for some, an increased awareness surrounding diversity and inclusion. In this heated context, sociologist Margaret A. Hagerman zeroes in on affluent, white kids to observe how they make sense of privilege, unequal educational opportunities, and police violence. In fascinating detail, Hagerman considers the role that they and their families play in the reproduction of racism and racial inequality in America.

White Kids, based on two years of research involving in-depth interviews with white kids and their families, is a clear-eyed and sometimes shocking account of how white kids learn about race. In doing so, this book explores questions such as, "How do white kids learn about race when they grow up in families that do not talk openly about race or acknowledge its impact?" and "What about children growing up in families with parents who consider themselves to be 'anti-racist'?"

Featuring the actual voices of young, affluent white kids and what they think about race, racism, inequality, and privilege, White Kids illuminates how white racial socialization is much more dynamic, complex, and varied than previously recognized. It is a process that stretches beyond white parents' explicit conversations with their white children and includes not only the choices parents make about neighborhoods, schools, peer groups, extracurricular activities, and media, but also the choices made by the kids themselves. By interviewing kids who are growing up in different racial contexts—from racially segregated to meaningfully integrated and from politically progressive to conservative—this important book documents key differences in the outcomes of white racial socialization across families. And by observing families in their everyday lives, this book explores the extent to which white families, even those with anti-racist intentions, reproduce and reinforce the forms of inequality they say they reject.

[Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen](#) by Jose Antonio Vargas

"This riveting, courageous memoir ought to be mandatory reading for every American." —Michelle Alexander, New York Times bestselling author of The New Jim Crow

"I cried reading this book, realizing more fully what my parents endured." —Amy Tan, New York Times bestselling author of The Joy Luck Club and Where the Past Begins

"This book couldn't be more timely and more necessary." —Dave Eggers, New York Times bestselling author of What Is the What and The Monk of Mokha

Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas, called "the most famous undocumented immigrant in America," tackles one of the defining issues of our time in this explosive and deeply personal call to arms.

"This is not a book about the politics of immigration. This book—at its core—is not about immigration at all. This book is about homelessness, not in a traditional sense, but in the unsettled, unmoored psychological state that undocumented immigrants like myself find ourselves in. This book is about lying and being forced to lie to get by; about passing as an American and as a contributing citizen; about families, keeping them together, and having to make new ones when you can't. This book is about constantly hiding from the government and, in the process, hiding from ourselves. This book is about what it means to not have a home.

After 25 years of living illegally in a country that does not consider me one of its own, this book is the closest thing I have to freedom."

—Jose Antonio Vargas, from Dear America

[The Devil's Highway: A True Story](#) by Luis Alberto Urrea

From the Pulitzer Prize finalist, "the single most compelling, lucid, and lyrical contemporary account of the absurdity of U.S. border policy" (The Atlantic).

In May 2001, a group of men attempted to cross the Mexican border into the desert of southern Arizona, through the deadliest region of the continent, the "Devil's Highway." Three years later, Luis Alberto Urrea wrote about what happened to them. The result was a national bestseller, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, a "book of the year" in multiple newspapers, and a work proclaimed as a modern American classic.

[Spare Parts: Four Undocumented Teenagers, One Ugly Robot, and the Battle for the American Dream](#) by Joshua Davis

In 2004, four Latino teenagers arrived at the Marine Advanced Technology Education Robotics Competition at the University of California, Santa Barbara. They were born in Mexico but raised in Phoenix, Arizona, where they attended an underfunded public high school. No one had ever suggested to Oscar, Cristian, Luis, or Lorenzo that they might amount to much—but two inspiring science teachers had convinced these impoverished, undocumented kids from the desert who had never even seen the ocean that they should try to build an underwater robot.

And build a robot they did. Their robot wasn't pretty, especially compared to those of the competition. They were going up against some of the best collegiate engineers in the country, including a team from MIT backed by a \$10,000 grant from ExxonMobil. The Phoenix teenagers had scraped together less than \$1,000 and built their robot out of scavenged parts. This was never a level competition—and yet, against all odds . . . they won!

But this is just the beginning for these four, whose story—which became a key inspiration to the DREAMers movement—will go on to include first-generation college graduations, deportation, bean-picking in Mexico, and service in Afghanistan.

Joshua Davis's Spare Parts is a story about overcoming insurmountable odds and four young men who proved they were among the most patriotic and talented Americans in this country—even as the country tried to kick them out.

[Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis](#) by J.D. Vance **#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER, NAMED BY THE TIMES AS ONE OF "6 BOOKS TO HELP UNDERSTAND TRUMP'S WIN" AND SOON TO BE A MAJOR-MOTION PICTURE DIRECTED BY RON HOWARD**

From a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, a powerful account of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town that offers a broader, probing look at the struggles of America's white working class. Hillbilly

Elegy is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans. The decline of this group, a demographic of our country that has been slowly disintegrating over forty years, has been reported on with growing frequency and alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the inside. J. D. Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hung around your neck.

*The Vance family story begins hopefully in postwar America. J. D.'s grandparents were “dirt poor and in love,” and moved north from Kentucky’s Appalachia region to Ohio in the hopes of escaping the dreadful poverty around them. They raised a middle-class family, and eventually their grandchild (the author) would graduate from Yale Law School, a conventional marker of their success in achieving generational upward mobility. But as the family saga of *Hillbilly Elegy* plays out, we learn that this is only the short, superficial version. Vance’s grandparents, aunt, uncle, sister, and, most of all, his mother, struggled profoundly with the demands of their new middle-class life, and were never able to fully escape the legacy of abuse, alcoholism, poverty, and trauma so characteristic of their part of America. Vance piercingly shows how he himself still carries around the demons of their chaotic family history.*

*A deeply moving memoir with its share of humor and vividly colorful figures, *Hillbilly Elegy* is the story of how upward mobility really feels. And it is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.*

[Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right](#) by Arlie Russell Hochschild

*In *Strangers in Their Own Land*, the renowned sociologist Arlie Hochschild embarks on a thought-provoking journey from her liberal hometown of Berkeley, California, deep into Louisiana bayou country—a stronghold of the conservative right. As she gets to know people who strongly oppose many of the ideas she famously champions, Hochschild nevertheless finds common ground and quickly warms to the people she meets—among them a Tea Party activist whose town has been swallowed by a sinkhole caused by a drilling accident—people whose concerns are actually ones that all Americans share: the desire for community, the embrace of family, and hopes for their children.*

**Strangers in Their Own Land* goes beyond the commonplace liberal idea that these are people who have been duped into voting against their own interests. Instead, Hochschild finds lives ripped apart by stagnant wages, a loss of home, an elusive American dream—and political choices and views that make sense in the context of their lives. Hochschild draws on her expert knowledge of the sociology of emotion to help us understand what it feels like to live in “red” America. Along the way she finds answers to one of the crucial questions of contemporary American politics: why do the people who would seem to benefit most from “liberal” government intervention abhor the very idea?*

[Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City](#) by Matthew Desmond

*NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE • One of the most acclaimed books of our time, this modern classic “has set a new standard for reporting on poverty” (Barbara Ehrenreich, *The New York Times Book Review*). In *Evicted*, Princeton sociologist and MacArthur “Genius” Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee as they each struggle to keep a roof over their heads. Hailed as “wrenching and revelatory” (*The Nation*), “vivid and unsettling” (*New York Review of Books*), *Evicted* transforms our understanding of poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving one of twenty-first-century America’s most devastating problems. Its unforgettable scenes of hope and loss remind us of the centrality of home, without which nothing else is possible.*

Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family by Amy Ellis Nutt
The inspiring true story of a transgender girl, her identical twin brother, and an ordinary American family's extraordinary journey to understand, nurture, and celebrate the uniqueness in us all, from the Pulitzer Prize-winning science reporter for The Washington Post

When Wayne and Kelly Maines adopted identical twin boys, they thought their lives were complete. But it wasn't long before they noticed a marked difference between Jonas and his brother, Wyatt. Jonas preferred sports and trucks and many of the things little boys were "supposed" to like; but Wyatt liked princess dolls and dress-up and playing Little Mermaid. By the time the twins were toddlers, confusion over Wyatt's insistence that he was female began to tear the family apart. In the years that followed, the Maineses came to question their long-held views on gender and identity, to accept and embrace Wyatt's transition to Nicole, and to undergo an emotionally wrenching transformation of their own that would change all their lives forever.

Becoming Nicole chronicles a journey that could have destroyed a family but instead brought it closer together. It's the story of a mother whose instincts told her that her child needed love and acceptance, not ostracism and disapproval; of a Republican, Air Force veteran father who overcame his deepest fears to become a vocal advocate for trans rights; of a loving brother who bravely stuck up for his twin sister; and of a town forced to confront its prejudices, a school compelled to rewrite its rules, and a courageous community of transgender activists determined to make their voices heard. Ultimately, Becoming Nicole is the story of an extraordinary girl who fought for the right to be herself.

Granted wide-ranging access to personal diaries, home videos, clinical journals, legal documents, medical records, and the Maineses themselves, Amy Ellis Nutt spent almost four years reporting this immersive account of an American family confronting an issue that is at the center of today's cultural debate. Becoming Nicole will resonate with anyone who's ever raised a child, felt at odds with society's conventions and norms, or had to embrace life when it plays out unexpectedly. It's a story of standing up for your beliefs and yourself—and it will inspire all of us to do the same.

As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised As A Girl by John Colapinto

In 1967, after a twin baby boy suffered a botched circumcision, his family agreed to a radical treatment that would alter his gender. The case would become one of the most famous in modern medicine; and a total failure. As Nature Made Him tells the extraordinary story of David Reimer, who, when finally informed of his medical history, made the decision to live as a male. A macabre tale of medical arrogance, it is first and foremost a human drama of one man; and one family's amazing survival in the face of terrible odds.

What Have We Done: The Moral Injury of Our Longest Wars by David Wood

From Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Wood, a battlefield view of moral injury, the signature wound of America's 21st century wars.

Most Americans are now familiar with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and its prevalence among troops. In this groundbreaking new book, David Wood examines the far more pervasive yet less understood experience of those we send to war: moral injury, the violation of our fundamental values of right and wrong that so often occurs in the impossible moral dilemmas of modern conflict. Featuring portraits of combat veterans and leading mental health researchers, along with Wood's personal observations of war and the young Americans deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, WHAT HAVE WE DONE offers an unflinching look at war and those who volunteer for it: the thrill and pride of service and, too often, the scars of moral injury.

Impeccably researched and deeply personal, WHAT HAVE WE DONE is a compassionate, finely drawn study of modern war and those caught up in it. It is a call to acknowledge our newest generation of veterans by

listening intently to them and absorbing their stories; and, as new wars approach, to ponder the inevitable human costs of putting American "boots on the ground."

[The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education](#) by Diane Ravitch

*A passionate plea to preserve and renew public education, **The Death and Life of the Great American School System** is a radical change of heart from one of America's best-known education experts.*

Diane Ravitch—former assistant secretary of education and a leader in the drive to create a national curriculum—examines her career in education reform and repudiates positions that she once staunchly advocated. Drawing on over forty years of research and experience, Ravitch critiques today's most popular ideas for restructuring schools, including privatization, standardized testing, punitive accountability, and the feckless multiplication of charter schools. She shows conclusively why the business model is not an appropriate way to improve schools. Using examples from major cities like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Denver, and San Diego, Ravitch makes the case that public education today is in peril.

Ravitch includes clear prescriptions for improving America's schools:

- leave decisions about schools to educators, not politicians or businessmen*
- devise a truly national curriculum that sets out what children in every grade should be learning*
- expect charter schools to educate the kids who need help the most, not to compete with public schools*
- pay teachers a fair wage for their work, not “merit pay” based on deeply flawed and unreliable test scores*
- encourage family involvement in education from an early age*

The Death and Life of the Great American School System is more than just an analysis of the state of play of the American education system. It is a must-read for any stakeholder in the future of American schooling.

[Poverty, by America](#)

by [Matthew Desmond](#) (Author)

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Evicted* reimagines the debate on poverty, making a “provocative and compelling” (NPR) argument about why it persists in America: because the rest of us benefit from it.

The United States, the richest country on earth, has more poverty than any other advanced democracy. Why? Why does this land of plenty allow one in every eight of its children to go without basic necessities, permit scores of its citizens to live and die on the streets, and authorize its corporations to pay poverty wages?

In this landmark book, acclaimed sociologist Matthew Desmond draws on history, research, and original reporting to show how affluent Americans knowingly and unknowingly keep poor people poor. Those of us who are financially secure exploit the poor, driving down their wages while forcing them to overpay for housing and access to cash and credit. We prioritize the subsidization of our wealth over the alleviation of poverty, designing a welfare state that gives the most to those who need the least. And we stockpile opportunity in exclusive communities,

creating zones of concentrated riches alongside those of concentrated despair. Some lives are made small so that others may grow.

Elegantly written and fiercely argued, this compassionate book gives us new ways of thinking about a morally urgent problem. It also helps us imagine solutions. Desmond builds a startlingly original and ambitious case for ending poverty. He calls on us all to become poverty abolitionists, engaged in a politics of collective belonging to usher in a new age of shared prosperity and, at last, true freedom.