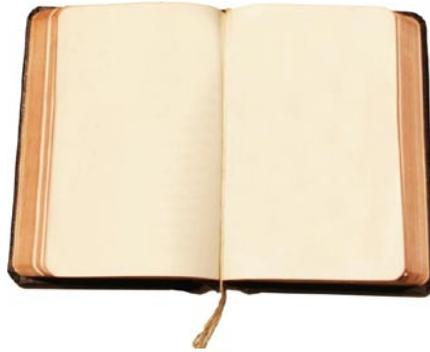


The summer is an open book ...



**WCU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
SUMMER READING LIST  
2008**

***Animal, Vegetable, Miracle***

Barbara Kingsolver

An insightful consideration of the foods people in the U.S. eat and why we know so little about them.

Karen Fitts

***The Audacity of Hope & Dreams from My Father***

Barack Obama

Cherise Pollard

***Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress: A Novel***

Dai Sijie

Two adolescent Chinese boys during the cultural revolution are sent to the country for re-education; one smuggles a copy of a Balzac novel—the only thing they have to read. A book about reading and culture.

Vicki Tischio

***Bearing the Body***

Ehud Havazelet

Daniel dies mysteriously and violently in San Francisco. His estranged brother, Nathan, and his father Sol, a Holocaust survivor who lost his own brother in the camps, travel from Boston to California to gather Daniel's ashes. In two days, a family history unfolds: who has born what body, for how long, and in what ways. Lovely, silently beautiful prose.

Kate Northrop

***The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears***

Dinaw Mengestu

“Barely suppressed despair and black wit infuse this beautifully observed debut from Ethiopian émigré Mengestu. Set over eight months in a gentrifying Washington, D.C., neighborhood in the 1970s, it captures an uptick in Ethiopian grocery store owner Sepha Stephanos's long-deferred hopes, as Judith, a white academic, fixes up the four-story house next to his apartment building, treats him to dinner and lets him steal a kiss. Just as unexpected is Sepha's friendship with Judith's biracial 11-year-old daughter, Naomi (one of the book's most vivid characters), over a copy of *The Brothers Karamazov*.” —*Publishers Weekly*

Eleanor Shevlin

***The Blind Assassin***

Margaret Atwood

Carla Verderame

***The Book Thief***

Markus Zusak

The narrator of *The Book Thief* is many things -- sardonic, wry, darkly humorous, compassionate—but not especially proud. ...Death meets the book thief, a 9-year-old girl named Liesel Meminger, when he comes

Eleanor Shevlin

to take her little brother, and she becomes an enduring force in his life, despite his efforts to resist her. "I traveled the globe . . . handing souls to the conveyor belt of eternity," Death writes. "I warned myself that I should keep a good distance from the burial of Liesel Meminger's brother. I did not heed my advice." As Death lingers at the burial, he watches the girl, who can't yet read, steal a gravedigger's instruction manual. Thus Liesel is touched first by Death, then by words, as if she knows she'll need their comfort during the hardships ahead. — *The Washington Post's Book World*

***Bridge of Sighs***

Jennie Skerl

Richard Russo

A moving story about lower-class childhood and small-town life in economically declining upstate New York; Russo at his best.

***The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao***

Cherise Pollard,  
Carolyn Sorisio

Junot Díaz

2008 Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction; this Dominican-American author won the Pulitzer for his first novel.

***The Brooklyn Follies***

Mike Peich

Paul Auster

Who would have thought that post-modern genius Auster could write a touching story about ordinary, human life? The Coen brothers will never film this one, but people will enjoy reading about Nathan Glass.

***Childhood's End & Rendezvous with Rama***

Tim Ray

Arthur C. Clarke

Two classics by the master of science fiction, Arthur C. Clarke. In honor of the recent passing of this prolific and insightful author who wrote more than 100 books in his lifetime and wrote about many technological developments (like geocentric satellites) before they had been invented, pick up one of these fairly brief (fewer than 300 pp.) classics. Though science fiction is oftentimes given short shrift as a genre, it can comment on our world through the creation of a futuristic world. *Childhood's End* gave us the Overlords, and *Rama* sparked a whole series of books (*Rama II*, *The Garden of Rama*, *Rama Revealed*). Escape and enjoy.

***Cold Mountain***

John Ward

Charles Frazier

***Collected Short Stories***

Luanne Smith

Andre Dubus, Sr.

Dubus's short stories have been adapted into movies like "In the Bedroom." His work is genius. Most recommended are "A Father's Story" and "The Killings."

***The Count of Monte Cristo***

Cheryl Wanko

Alexandre Dumas

Complexly plotted and intensely exciting, this nineteenth-century French novel will enthrall you with its tale of retribution, justice, and punishment, as Edmond Dantès inexorably pursues his prey. Read it during the summer because, at upwards of 1000 pages, you'll never get the time to do it during the academic year. You won't regret the time spent.

***The Design of Everyday Things***

Lynne Cooke

Donald Norman

Have you ever tried to operate a new product or attempted to use a software program, and get frustrated because the product or program doesn't work as you expected? Most likely, it's the design – not you – that's responsible for the problems. Norman explores why disconnects often occur between product/program design and human interaction. This book is a classic "usability" text.

***Disgrace***

Mike Peich,  
Peter Kent

J. M. Coetzee

Excellent: challenging, disturbing, and a really good read.

***The Electronic Literature Collection***

Available for free at <<http://collection.eliterature.org/1/>>

Various contributors, published by the Electronic Literature Organization. A collection of multimedia texts that challenge traditional conceptions of the literary and narrative or poetic modes.

Bob Fletcher

***Farewell, My Lovely***

Raymond Chandler

Crime—literary noir #1.

Jane Jeffrey

***Five Quarters of the Orange***

Joanne Harris

Carla Verderame

***Fixer Chao***

Han Ong

Phillipino-American grifter is drawn into a plot to defraud New York City socialites by pretending to be a feng shui expert. Scathing parody/critique of social class and identity.

Seth Kahn

***The Gathering***

Anne Enright

Winner of the Booker Prize.

Bob Fletcher

***Gentleman and Players***

Joanne Harris

Carla Verderame

***God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater***

Kurt Vonnegut

One of Vonnegut's best novels but often overshadowed by his other works.

Walter Fox

***The Hakawati***

Rabib Alameddine

“Alameddine mingles a four-generation family saga with a cornucopia of Arabian tales and historical dramas to create a one-of-a-kind novel. Osama al-Kharrat returns in 2003 to Beirut, where his family once owned a prosperous car dealership, to visit his dying father Farid. . . . Osama, who has lived most of his adult life in California, speedily sinks back into the excitable embrace of his extended family (including numerous strongminded women) as they take turns at his father’s hospital bedside. The history of the al-Kharrats and of Lebanon unfolds side by side with multiple strands of Arabian folklore creatively reimagined by Alameddine.” –*Kirkus Reviews*

Eleanor Shevlin

***The Illiad & The Odyssey***

Homer

The two works that establish the Western literary tradition.

Kostas Myrsiades,  
John Ward

***In a Lonely Place***

Dorothy B. Hughes

Fascinating hard-boiled pulp fiction from the late 1940s that puts us inside the head of a serial killer named Dix Steele as he goes to pieces in postwar Los Angeles; lots of great noir atmosphere and interesting characterizations; part of the Feminist Press’s ‘Women Write Pulp’ series; adapted into a well-regarded 1950 film noir starring Humphrey Bogart and Gloria Graham.

Andrew Sargent

***Istanbul: Memories and the City***

Orhan Pamuk

This is a delightful, if rather quirky book, translated from Turkish, and it celebrates the city in which the author has lived all his life. As the *NYT* remarks, it is not a conventional guide book, but it "tells of an invisible melancholy and the way it acts on an imaginative young man, aggrieving him but pricking his creativity."

Peter Kent

***The Jewel in the Crown***

Paul Scott

This first of four novels in Scott's *Raj Quartet* is an absolute masterpiece of fiction. It is wonderful, and anyone who reads it will be driven to read the rest of them.

Dwight McCawley

***King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa***

Adam Hochschild

Excellent history of the Congo—would be very interesting to someone interested in Joseph Conrad.

Ruth Sabol

***The Kite Runner***

Khaled Hosseini

Hannah Ashley

***The Known World***

Edward P. Jones

Carolyn Sorisio

***Let Me Stand Alone: The Journals of Rachel Corrie***

Rachel Corrie

The moving and very human journal of Rachel Corrie, a young American woman who was crushed to death by a military bulldozer in 2003 while trying to save a Palestinian family's home from demolition.

Graham MacPhee

***Ludlow***

David Mason

A verse novel that recounts the bloodiest coal-mining disaster in Colorado when owners tried to suppress miners' rights.

Mike Peich

***Maps for Lost Lovers***

Nadeem Aslam

Lynette McGrath

***March***

Geraldine Brooks

Novel that imagines the Civil War experiences of March, the absent father character in *Little Women*. It won the Pulitzer Prize in 2006.

Judy Scheffler

***Offshore***

Penelope Fitzgerald

A great find! Fitzgerald was awarded the Booker Prize for *Offshore*, and three of her others have been shortlisted for that prize.

Peter Kent

***The Omnivore's Dilemma***

Michael Pollan

Engagingly and critically examines the ingredients and processes that created four meals (from industrial to organic). You'll never look at food on your plate in the same way.

Cheryl Wanko

***Out Stealing Horses***

Per Petterson

This novel by a Norwegian writer was named one of the "ten best books of the year" for 2007 by the *NY Times Book Review*.

Walter Fox

***The Places in Between***

Rory Stewart

The author walked across Afghanistan two weeks after the fall of the Taliban. This is a brilliant introduction to the daily lives of people who practice a culture very different from the one most of us are familiar with in a countryside wracked by more than thirty years of war. It is also a superb introduction to one of the great modern literary genres – travel writing.

Michael Brooks

***The Postman Always Rings Twice***

James M. Cain

Crime—literary noir #2.

Jane Jeffrey

***The Professor's Daughter***

Emily Raboteau

Beautifully written contemporary fiction dealing with African-American identity.

Cortie Ervin

***Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida*** Ayan Gangopadhyay

Hent De Vries

Drawing upon as well as critiquing foundational thinkers such as René Girard, this book is a philosophico-theoretical attempt to rethink, and thereby reconfigure, the relationship between violence and religion. This book quite convincingly shows the irreducibility of violence in religious thinking—and is even more topical today—while it shows that “philosophy” is not that innocent, either!

***The Rings of Saturn***

W. G. Sebald

The book recounts a walking tour of England's Suffolk coast, which activates the most haunted (and haunting) historical imagination I've ever encountered. (I should add that Sebald's writing is 100% humorless, so don't take this book to the beach.) Genre? Unclassifiable or, maybe, we can shoot for "faction."

Paul Maltby

***The Road***

Cormac McCarthy

A riveting journey on foot taken by a father and his young son across a post-apocalyptic America that is scorched beyond recognition, unable to grow crops and occupied by ravenous survivors trying to stave off starvation. Horrific but impossible to put down.

Chuck Bauerlein

***The Ruling Caste***

David Gilmour

Lynette McGrath

***The Sacred Games***

Vikram Chandra

Simply the most marvelous book on my home city, Bombay, and about its underworld. Ciao, Joyce; Enter, Vikram!

Geetha Ramanathan

***The Stone Gods***

Jeanette Winterson

A cyberpunk literary novel, or something like that.

Bob Fletcher

***Team of Rivals***

Doris Kearns Goodwin

About Abraham Lincoln, the people who surrounded him, and political intrigue. A page-turner for a history book!

John Ward,  
Ruth Sabol

***Things Are Disappearing Here***

Kate Northrop

Just an incredibly beautiful book of poetry, by a colleague who will be sorely missed.

Lynette McGrath  
... and the whole department

***The Things They Carried***

Tim O'Brien

Although it takes place during the Vietnam War, it's relevant to the Iraq War, too.

Karen Fitts

***The Time Traveler's Wife***

Audrey Niffenegger

Harr DeTareble, a librarian, travels involuntarily through time, and the life of his friend/girlfriend/wife parallels his at times as their paths cross and then diverge. Hopefully the movie will do it justice!

Mary Clark

***Three Cups of Tea***

Greg Mortenson

Moving description of Mortenson's project that builds schools for girls in Afghanistan as a way of promoting peace.

Anne Herzog

***Tao Te Ching***

A new English version by Stephen Mitchell that is close to poetry.

Walter Fox

***Waiting for the Barbarians***

J. M. Coetzee

A remarkable novel; an allegory in the best Kafka tradition that points to modern paranoia: "we don't know who they are or what they want, but we should go kill them."

Teddie West

***White Teeth***

Zadie Smith

Debut novel, at a very young age. Won the Whitbread first novel award, *NY Times Book Review* Editor's Choice, etc. From the book blurb: a humorous book about "three cultures, three families and three generations," dealing with "friendship, love, war," and the past returning to haunt and all that.

Luanne Smith

