

# WCU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SUMMER READING & VIEWING LIST: Faculty Picks 2015

This annual list presents suggestions for summer reading/viewing from individual faculty of the West Chester University English Department.

You can also find this list & its predecessors at  
[http://www.wcupa.edu/academics/sch\\_cas.eng/facultyPicks.aspx](http://www.wcupa.edu/academics/sch_cas.eng/facultyPicks.aspx).

**Book, podcast, film, site:**

**Recommender:**

*20 Feet From Stardom*

Morgan Neville, Director

They sing your favorite songs, but you've probably never heard of them. This film highlights the backup singers of some of the most iconic American bands and the stark contrast of their lives to those of the famous musicians. Exploring ideas of gender, race, and economics, this film is engaging, thought-provoking, and entertaining, just like the music it includes. I saw this movie on a whim and have been recommending it ever since. It won an Oscar for Best Documentary and is available on Netflix. And, fellow faculty, because of this film, I learned we all have something in common with the woman who inspired the song *Brown Sugar* as she is now an adjunct professor of languages.

Maureen McVeigh Trainor

*99% Invisible*

<http://99percentinvisible.org>

The title comes from a quotation by Buckminster Fuller about the unseen centrality of design to human lives: "Ninety-nine percent of who you are is invisible and untouchable." A favorite of Ira Glass and the Radiolab team, the production values are excellent, and the stories are cocktail party gold. Recent shows cover the popularity of the Portland airport's carpet design; the introduction of palm trees to Los Angeles; an electric bulb that has been continuously operating for 113 years; and how you can always tell what used to be a Pizza Hut.

Rodney Mader

*Americanah*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Dr. Ashley: A revelation about race, globalization and writing wrapped in a love story by the author of *Half a Yellow Sun*. Oh, and it's LOL funny.

Dr. Hall: The novel is about a Nigerian woman's struggles with racism & blackness in America, Britain and Nigeria.

Hannah Ashley & Bernard Hall

*And God Created the Au Pair*

B.G. Betz

Benedicte Newland & Pascale Smets

Written by sisters, this novel is a hilarious e-mail exchange as one sister and her family relocate to Canada while the other continues to live in London. Kiddie Halloween parties, dishwashing liquid, and Victorian bath tubs all feature in this scrappy narrative.

*Arena: The Story of the Federal Theatre*

Joe Navitsky

Hallie Flanagan

This is Flanagan's remarkable history of the Federal Theatre Project, a WPA program that employed thousands of artists, actors, stagehands, writers, and other entertainers during its brief existence from 1935-1939. Flanagan served as National Director for the sprawling program that aimed to introduce cutting-edge drama to Americans who might otherwise not have the opportunity to experience it. Among its most enduring contributions to American cultural history are Orson Welles' "Voodoo Macbeth" and *Dr. Faustus*; Athur Arent's *Power* and other "living newspapers," and an adaptation of Sinclair Lewis' novel *It Can't Happen Here*.

*Bad Monkey*

Cheryl Wanko

Carl Hiaasen

Set in the weirdness that is Southern Florida, this thriller is laugh-out-loud hilarious as the protagonist tries to solve a murder while simultaneously engaging in subterfuge against the McMansion being built next door. It features a former temperamental film star (said monkey of the title), a Bahamian voodoo witch, a mysterious arm *sans* body, and a dose of ecological awareness. If you are looking for the perfect book to decompress with, this is it.

*The Betrayal*

Carla Verderame

Helen Dunmore

This is a sequel to *The Siege* (see below), also historical fiction, focusing on one Russian family's trials after the siege of Leningrad.

*A Brief History of Seven Killings*

Eleanor Shevlin

Marlon James

A *New York Times*'s review describes James' epic as a "Tarantino remake of 'The Harder They Come' but with a soundtrack by Bob Marley and a script by Oliver Stone and William Faulkner, with maybe a little creative boost from some primo ganja." Not for everyone (very high doses of violence), this work has at its core the 1976 attempted assassination of Bob Marley. As James' multi-voiced narration unfolds, it seeks to convey Jamaican poverty, corruption, and social unrest and extends its story to Jamaican ties to the New York's crack and gang wars of the 1980s and onto the Jamaica of the 1990s.

*The Buried Giant*

Bob Fletcher

Kazuo Ishiguro

Definitely on my list. Recommended by my spouse and a *NY Times* review. Ishiguro has mesmerized me twice before (*The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*).

*College: What it Was, Is, and Should Be*

Rodney Mader

Andrew Delbanco

Columbia's Delbanco brings his extensive knowledge of American History to this wide-ranging, passionate call for the centrality of the liberal arts tradition to the 21st-century academy. If you need to have your sense of calling reaffirmed, this book can help.

*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* Randall Cream

Haruki Murakami

Murakami's latest novel investigates the ways in which nostalgia serves as a paralyzing force of self-obstruction. A man's desire to understand his own past— what *really* happened at school?— produces a haunting physical and emotional journey. Indulge in a 3-day binge, but also a book you can read while sleeping in the sun.

*Detroit: An American Autopsy*

Carolyn Sorisio

Charlie LeDuff

This is a brutal but entirely gripping blend of memoir and journalism by a Pulitzer-Prize winning *New York Times* journalist who returns to report on his hometown.

*The Devil's Detective*

Chuck Bauerlein

Simon Kurt Unworth

In *The Devil's Detective*, a sea change is coming to Hell ... and a man named Thomas Fool is caught in the middle. Fool is an Information Man, an investigator tasked with cataloging and filing reports on the endless stream of violence and brutality that flows through Hell. His job holds no reward or satisfaction, because Hell has rules but no justice. When an important political delegation arrives and a human is found murdered in a horrific manner—extravagant even by Hell's standards— everything changes. Something is challenging the rules and order of Hell, so the Bureaucracy sends Fool to identify and track down the killer. But how do you investigate murder in a place where death is common currency ... or when your main suspect pool is a legion of demons?

*The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in  
Theater and Philosophy*

Ayan Gangopadhyay

Martin Puchner

This book deals with the close proximity between history of philosophy and history of theater/performance in the West.

*Dubliners*

Graham MacPhee

James Joyce

Accessible and humane, Joyce's early collection of 15 short stories gives a remarkable vision of the modern world. Brilliantly observed, the stories capture a diverse range of characters caught in situations they struggle to understand or change.

*Elements of Style*

Will Nessly

Strunk and White

A fussy little book with a big impact—on your writing and your thinking.

*Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World* Eirini Panagiotidou  
Nicholas Ostler

Ostler provides a fascinating history of the world's great tongues, including Sumerian, Egyptian, Latin, Chinese, Sanskrit, Quechua, and English, and how they may have expanded their reach at expense of others. An account of lingua francas present and past that is, at the same time, a history of rise and fall of civilizations. An exciting read for anyone interested in history and linguistics as well as issues of power and diversity.

*Encounters with the Archdruid* Justin Rademaekers  
John McPhee

This is an exceptional work of non-fiction, which explores environmental advocacy through a profile of David Brower, former director of The Sierra Club. McPhee documents Brower's advocacy work to protect three distinct places: the Cascade Mountains from copper mining; Cumberland Island, S.C. from real estate development; and the Colorado River from the introduction of a new dam below Glen Canyon. In his accounts of these efforts, McPhee brilliantly unpacks the ideologies that characterize divergent American conceptions of nature, the wild, and economic development.

*Every Man Dies Alone* Chuck Bauerlein  
Hans Fallada (translated by Michael Hoffman)

Based on a true story, Fallada's novel was written in a frantic 24-day period shortly after the end of World War II and immediately after the author was released from a Nazi insane asylum. He did not live to see its publication in 1947. Primo Levi called it "the greatest book ever written about German resistance to the Nazis." When it was translated into English in 2009, it was listed on dozens of "best of the year" lists. It's very likely to be regarded as one of the most important novels of the 20th century. Fallada's journalistic eye for detail and the compelling moral weight of his vision make this love story and page-turner essential reading.

*Everything* Sarah Paylor  
Sir Terry Pratchett

I don't mean the novel *Everything* written by Sir Terry Pratchett, who died this year; I mean the collected works of Sir Terry Pratchett. He mostly wrote fantasy, but the kind of fantasy that is a mirror to our world, and lets you explore serious issues—gender, diversity, religion, crime, war, death, life. You will also laugh. I especially recommend: *Nightwatch, Hogfather, Thud, Going Postal, A Hat Full of Sky, Small Gods, Interesting Times, Maskerade, Johnny and the Dead, Nation, Good Omens, Truckers/Diggers/Wings, The Last Hero, Monstrous Regiment.*

*A Field Guide to Burying Your Parents* B.G. Betz  
Liza Palmer

Despite the macabre title, this novel is a funny but deep look at the relationships among siblings as their parents age and eventually die. It is set in gorgeous Ojai, CA.

*Girl in a Band* Randall Cream  
Kim Gordon

Read it for the behind the scenes view of Sonic Youth, for some juicy gossip on Cobain, or to see how a 60-something teenager riots on the streets of SOHO. Much, much less rewarding than books

like *Our Band Could Be Your Life* or *24 Hour Party People*, but, unlike those books, this reads like it was actually written by the musician herself. Well illustrated, too!

*The Girl With All the Gifts*

Shannon Mrkich

M. R. Carey

A "smart" zombie apocalypse tale with fascinating (and terrifying) science, a compelling plot that seamlessly shifts perspectives, and exceptionally rich characters ... and you'll be surprised who you root for at the end.

*Ghost Boy*

Merry G. Perry

Martin Pistorius

I heard about this true story in the news and had to read the first-person account of a young man "trapped" in his own body for fourteen years. The book is amazing and changed how I think about relationships, disability, and life. Please read it. You will be sad and you will laugh aloud.

*The God Species: How to Save the Planet I  
in the Age of Humans*

John Ward

Mark Lynas

In this book, Lynas, a highly regarded environmental writer and Oxford University research associate, presents a potentially important (and in some instances controversial) set of proposals as to how our species may be able to reverse at least a significant portion of the damage we have done to the planet and the other species who have the right to share it with us.

*The Hard Way on Purpose: Essays and  
Dispatches from the Rust Belt*

Carolyn Sorisio

David Giffel

As someone who lived in Akron for several years, I found this to be a nuanced, lovingly detailed memoir of place.

*The Harder They Come*

Michael Brooks

Thomas Coraghessan Boyle

A tough-minded look at the American soul.

*The History of Love*

Paul Maltby

Nicole Krauss

Krauss' novel explores how the memory of the Holocaust has become more tenuous and fragile as the last survivors die out and, consequently, literary genres must do the work of their oral testimony. This book, which playfully complicates our understanding of authors, plagiarists, translators, and readers, is surely indebted to Cynthia Ozick's *The Messiah of Stockholm* and Philip Roth's strain of metafiction.

*The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms*

Ashley Patriarca

N. K. Jemisin

A young woman, mourning her mother's murder, must navigate the intrigues of her estranged grandfather's court, as well as the demands of the gods. Debut novels rarely show such

complex and powerful writing as Jemisin's. I'm looking forward to reading the remainder of her Inheritance trilogy this summer.

*In Search of Jefferson's Moose:*

Tim Ray

*Notes on the State of Cyberspace*

David G. Post

In this strikingly interesting book, author David Post uses his extensive research on the writings of Thomas Jefferson to frame his argument on the nature of cyberspace. Delving at times so heavily into the writings of Jefferson for pages on end, Post may leave you, like me, more fascinated by Jefferson (and his moose) than by the fact that this book is actually about the laws and regulations of cyberspace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jefferson's ideas on governing the American frontier and regulating natural resources are so impressive and his writing is so meticulous and voluminous that it's easy to become awestruck by this multi-talented and intensely curious and insightful intellectual—and, by extension, persuaded by his views on freedom and federalism. The moose in the title is the skeleton of a specimen that, at Jefferson's request, was shipped to Paris in 1787, where Jefferson was the American Minister to France, so he could display it in the lobby of his residence as a symbol of the vast possibilities of a largely unexplored New World. Post uses the oddity of the moose in Paris as a metaphor for cyberspace in his Jeffersonian reading of how we should regulate and govern cyberspace.

*Inherent Vice*

Teddy West

Thomas Pynchon

A psychedelic tour of the last flowering of southern California madness in the 60's. Its recently released movie allows the reader a second artistic interpretation of the novel.

*The Innovators: How A Group of Inventors, Hackers, Geniuses, and Geeks Created the Digital Revolution*

Jordan Schugar

Walter Isaacson

Another vintage, epic installment from Isaacson who also brought us the tomes of Einstein, Franklin, and Jobs. This time Isaacson's book chronicles men and woman who were influential in creating the current digital revolution from microchips to computer systems to the current instantiations of the Interweb.

*Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know*

Shannon Mrkich

Alexandra Horowitz

A must read for all dog lovers. Horowitz, a cognitive scientist, uses hard science and soft anecdotes to debunk canine myths, uncover our best friends' innate talents, and explain the mysteries that make our companions more than dogs and truly part of our families.

*Invisible Histories*

Maureen McVeigh

Lisa Naomi Konigsberg

Lisa's poetry is personal and universal as well as intimate and global. Its accessibility allows for immediate connection, but her inventive language and complex themes also invite repeated readings and ongoing responses. Her compassion for her subjects, speakers, and readers will engage and affect you.

*Kill Everything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam*      Graham MacPhee

Nick Turse

A recent nonfictional account of the massive extent of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by US forces in Vietnam. In movies and TV, US popular culture has done a remarkable job whitewashing the industrial scale of violence inflicted by the US on South East Asia, reframing it exclusively in terms of the trauma suffered by American soldiers. As Turse shows in this study, the foundation for this extraordinary act of historical revisionism was laid by the US military. In an Orwellian program of historical censorship, military investigators systematically suppressed testimony by serving soldiers about huge numbers of human rights abuses. This book is based on the archive discovered by Turse that documents this cover up.

*Lexicon*      Bob Fletcher

Max Barry

This one's suitable for the beach or the long flight. A thriller with a complicated plot in which "poets" use words to kill.

*Magic for Beginners: Stories*      Christopher Merkner

Kelly Link

These short stories are a rigorous workout for the mind—at times fun, evasive, upsetting, sweet and brazen. Often called "dreamlike" or "surreal," and most recently "slipstream," Link's stories in this collection seem to celebrate readers with a big appreciation for the tension between innocence and pain.

*The Magicians*      Erin Hurt

Lev Grossman

This is a book about magic, and those who become magicians, if they lived in the real world. The mystery of magic is present in this text, but so is the melancholy and disappointment of the every day, which magic can't always fix. A captivating but not always uplifting read.

*The Morland Dynasty*      B.G. Betz

Cynthia Harrod-Eagles

A 35-novel series that begins with *The Founding*. This series follows the Morland family of England in the 1400s to the brink of World War II. Engrossing and historical, these books will help you entertain yourself at the beach and through the next winter's long nights too.

*My Paris Kitchen: Recipes and Stories*      Vicki Tischio

David Leibovitz

This is a lovely hard-bound cookbook full of delicious French recipes for things like duck fat cookies and scalloped potatoes with blue cheese and roasted garlic. Plus lots of stories about cooking and living in France. It was a pleasure to read, and it was great fun experimenting with the recipes.

*The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* Rachel Banner  
Edgar Allan Poe

Poe's only novel. It's presented as a travelogue/adventure story about polar explorations, "undiscovered" lands, and the popular 19th-century "Hollow Earth" theory (about a hole in the bottom of the world). Because this is Poe, it also features mutiny, cannibalism, weird science, giant ice gods, a group of people who are terrified by the color white—and a whole host of implied racial anxieties. (See *PYM*, below!)

*The Narrow Road to the Deep North* Eleanor Shevlin  
Richard Flanagan

Winner of the 2014 Booker Prize, this lengthy, powerful novel focuses on an Australian medical doctor Dorrigo Evans and has been called by one reviewer the Australian *War and Peace*. This achingly beautiful, complex, and at times brutally graphic novel focuses on Evans's experiences in and memories of a World War II Japanese POW camp that helped build the Thai-Burma railway. Aptly, its title is taken from a classic of Japanese literature, a travel diary by haiku poet Bashō.

*NW* Bob Fletcher  
Zadie Smith

Having really enjoyed *White Teeth* and *On Beauty*, I plan on reading Zadie Smith's 2012 novel *NW* this summer. As a student of the Victorian novel, I like panoramic multi-plot narratives that weave the lives of an array of characters together, and Smith's novels give us a contemporary version of that set in multicultural London. I might take it with me on summer trips as an audio book—there aren't a lot of novels I can listen to and come away with the same grasp or appreciation as when reading the book, but Smith's prose is vivid enough for that.

*The Other Side: A Memoir* Kristine Ervin  
Lacy M. Johnson

A poetic, non-linear memoir about a woman's surviving a kidnapping, rape, and attempted murder by a man she once lived with and about her recovery process. While the story is dramatic and perfect for a crime television show, Johnson resists the master narratives by exploring her own agency and complicity in the relationship, by refusing to vilify the perpetrator, by focusing on the body and its memory, and by weaving together poetry, prose, police reports, and literary theory.

*The Orchardist* Hannah Ashley  
Amanda Coplin

A startlingly beautiful meditation on land and grief and family.

*Orphan Black* Ashley Patriarca  
BBC America

*Orphan Black* opens with a (literally) killer reveal: con woman Sarah Manning watches a woman with her face jump in front of a moving train. As the show develops, Sarah learns that she is one of an unknown number of clones, and there are unknown adversaries seeking to kill or capture all of the clones. This show's representation of what it means to be female in the modern world, as well as its exploration of the ethics of human cloning, makes it the most compelling show currently on television.

*The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*

Mary Clark

Nadia Hashmi

A multigenerational story of Kabul, Afghanistan, 2007. Due to the Taliban's rule, Rahima and her sisters cannot attend school, and rarely leave home, because they are girls. But she finds a way. A century earlier, her great-great-grandmother, Shekiba, takes the same journey. Both lives, intertwined, tell a fabulous story. I just might re-read this summer.

*Pete the Cat: And His Four Groovy Buttons*

Jordan Schugar

Eric Litwin

This summer, my house, with three little boys and two literacy professors is all about the Pete the Cat and his various adventures with his buttons, his music, and his shoes. My kids love reading and listening and we all love Pete's ethos, smoothness and grooviness.

*Philosophers and Thesians: Thinking Performance*

Ayan Gangopadhyay

Freddie Rokem

Like my other recommendation, this one, too, deals with the apparent contradictions between discourses on theater/performance and philosophy in the West, showing that there isn't any.

*The Physics of the Dead*

Seth Kahn

Luke Smitherd

The newly (sometimes not-so-newly) dead arrive in a one-square-mile section of Coventry, England, and have to learn the rules of their world, how to avoid unnecessary pain and anguish, and how to come to grips with the likelihood that they may never again leave this place (although nobody seems to know for sure). Imagine a novelized *No Exit* with a dose of Gen-X irony, and you're in the neighborhood.

*A Prayer for Owen Meany*

Stacy Esch

This book does not want to be forgotten. Nor does John Irving. Return with him to tiny Gravesend, New Hampshire and two best friends, John Wheelwright and the unforgettable OWEN MEANY. Their coming of age at the dawn of TV, John Kennedy's presidency, the Vietnam War, and the cultural revolution of the sixties, and the story's backhanded spirituality, won't disappoint.

*PYM*

Rachel Banner

Mat Johnson

Johnson's novel revisits *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym's* (see above!) fictional island of Tsalal. Set in the present and featuring a cast of contemporary African American characters, Johnson incisively and hilariously skewers Poe's racialized fears and the contemporary American sociopolitical landscape. Just as bonkers as *Arthur Gordon Pym*—key elements of the story include Little Debbie snack cakes, a biodome, and Thomas Kinkadee paintings—it's a wonderful and important response to Poe's novel.

*Reading Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World*

Jordan Schugar

Naomi Baron

A professor and linguist from American University, Baron describes how the content we read on screens is changing the way we process text. At times, Baron paints a fairly morbid picture of the effect digital reading has on our comprehension and processing but inevitably provides lots of

historical contexts of the book, language, and communication and the impact computers, tablets, and devote eReaders will have on the future.

S.

Amy Anderson

JJ Abrams and Doug Dorst

The mystery in this multi-layered text crosses genres, beginning in the footnotes and marginalia of an old book and expanding to post cards, long-lost letters, and hand-written confessions.

*Searching for Sugar Man*

Cheryl Wanko

Malik Bendjelloul, director

Though a documentary, it's a story that proves the adage that real life is stranger than fiction. A 1970s singer-songwriter named Rodriguez releases two albums that sink into oblivion in the U.S. However, the music finds its way to South Africa, where it becomes the soundtrack to the anti-apartheid movement. Rodriguez is, meanwhile, working in Detroit, completely unaware. You'll ponder the meanings of success and failure in life—and the film's triumphant ending will draw tears.

*The Secret Life of Lobsters: How Fishermen and Scientists are Unraveling the Mysteries of Our Favorite Crustacean*

Cheryl Wanko

Who doesn't love lobsters? Quiet, mysterious, dignified, proudly carrying their ragged claws across the ocean floor—they definitely do *not* scuttle. This well-researched book takes us into their biology as well as the lives of those who harvest them off the coast of Maine.

*Serial* (podcast)

Chuck Bauerlein

Sarah Koenig

Co-created and hosted by the veteran "This American Life" producer Koenig, *Serial* has an irresistible concept: it's a season-long exploration of a single story, unfolding over a series of episodes. It's a nifty combination of prestige-television-style episodic storytelling and the portability of podcasts. The first season investigates a 1999 murder in Baltimore, Md. Season 1 tracks the trial of Adnan Syed, who in 1999 was convicted of killing his ex-girlfriend, Hae Min Lee. Many of his friends believed Syed to be innocent, and some even thought his the attorney had mishandled or even purposefully thrown the case. Perfect fare for long-distance vacation trips in the car.

*The Siege*

Carla Verderame

Helen Dunmore

This historical fiction account chronicles the siege of Leningrad during World War II. Dunmore's writing is terrific. (See *The Betrayal*, above.)

*Slaves in the Family*

Andrew Sargent

Edward Ball

Ball's elegantly written book chronicles the history and legacy of the Balls of South Carolina, one of America's oldest and largest slaveholding families. Combining investigative research, archival work, and gripping oral history—including interviews not only with his white relatives but with the contemporary descendants of the African Americans whom his ancestors enslaved—Ball deep-

dives into the repressed history of slavery in the United States and argues powerfully that we must find meaningful ways "to answer in the present for a crime against humanity in the past."

*Sociological Images*

Ashley Patriarca

<http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/>

Lisa Wade

Run by an associate professor at Occidental College and a team of equally talented contributors, this blog analyzes current, compelling images in media. I've used posts from the blog in quite a few classes, but I also simply enjoy reading the authors' varied takes on visuals. Recent posts have critiqued "defensive architecture" (the practice of designing public spaces to be inhospitable to homeless people), the rhetorical power of Strawberry Shortcake, and early representations of feminists.

*The Strange Library*

Randall Cream

Haruki Murakami

This is a short story written in 1982 that has been recently translated and masquerades as a novel, but if you buy it you won't care that it's short. It's the best illustrated book I've seen in a long while, with such a mobius strip of a paratext (is that a library card holder, or a vest pocket?). If you're teaching 5th grade to 11th, this would make for an amazing classroom book. Enjoy!

*The Thirteenth Tale*

Michelle F. Blake

Diane Setterfield

Famously reclusive and assiduously mysterious author Vida Winter is dying, but, before she dies, she wants to set the record straight about what her true life story is. She chooses young Margaret Lea to be her biographer, and in the course of hearing Vida's story, Margaret learns not only about Vida Winter's ghosts, but about her own, and about the infamous thirteenth tale.

*To Rise Again at a Decent Hour*

Teddy West

Joshua Ferris

An outrageously witty, irreligious book about a Brooklyn dentist, Dr. Paul O'Rourke, who finds his identity has been stolen on line by Dr. Paul O'Rourke. A reader does not have to know the entire history of Christianity and Judaism, but it would help. Ferris's novel was shortlisted for the Man Booker and others; a brilliant, "riotously funny" satire on the quest to find the real Paul.

*The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*

Jen Bacon

Thomas King

I'm not sure how I failed to stumble upon this treasure earlier, but I allow for the possibility that it is part of my story that it came to me when it did, as a "gift" from a colleague at the department holiday party book exchange. Stories are all that we are. That's the message of the text, and the beauty of my personal copy is that it was annotated by a new colleague and friend who is now part of the WCU English Department story. Thank you, Tim Dougherty, for reminding me that the stories we tell are who we are, and that we can only make new worlds by telling new stories. Reading this book will make you want to change the world.

*Under the Skin*

Randall Cream

Jonathan Glazer, director

You may have missed this film in the theaters—it wasn't marketed at all, and played in only a few art houses across the country. That's a shame. Jonathan Glazer is best known for his fan-pics of Radiohead & Blur, but this film is something else entirely. Scarlett Johansson stars in this dark (literally) emotionally wrenching sci-fi thriller set to a gothic ambient soundtrack. The film is almost silent, so silent that it seems disruptive when you hear dialogue. Watch it in a darkened room, at night. Can a thriller be philosophical? You'll think about it for weeks afterwards.

*The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*

Spring Ulmer

Stefano Harney and Fred Moten

Beautiful, radical thinking about the ways we can make the most of institutionalized study and the academic environment.

*The Unwritten Vol.1: Tommy Taylor and the Bogus Identity*

Amy Anderson

Mike Carey &amp; Peter Gross

The first volume in a series of comic books that draw on elements of fandom (Harry Potter, anyone?) to explore how our world is made and remade through the stories we tell.

*Viviane*

Seth Kahn

Julia Deck

A recently divorced French woman believes she may have murdered her therapist but isn't sure. A never-identified narrator speaks to her in the second person, and throughout the book it becomes increasingly unclear whether the memories she's being told she has are real. Tricky psychological mystery.

*White Magic: The Age of Paper*

Eleanor Shevlin

Lothar Müller

Translated from the German and written by a journalist/scholar, this work examines paper as a cultural force detached from its typical associations with Gutenberg and the world of print. One will gain much pleasure by reading this dynamic account of paper straight through in traditionally linear fashion, and one will obtain equal delight by dipping in at various points. No matter the approach, one will encounter fascinating, thought-provoking ideas about paper within the framework of literary, media, technology, and economic histories—and a realization of how it still very much informs our current moment.

*Zoo Station, Silesian Station, Stettin Station, Potsdam Station, Lehrter Station, and Masaryk Station*

Jeff Sommers

David Downing's John Russell spy series

Intelligent and compelling spy novels set in 1939-1948 Berlin and other nearby European locations. Not a James Bond gadget-filled spy series nor a John LeCarré convoluted treatment of geo (and office) politics, the *Station* series focuses more on the quotidian concerns of a British journalist and his German girlfriend as they try to live through World War II and get swept up in spying for the Americans, British, Russians, and Germans at various times. I read 'em all during winter break, sitting in a fine upholstered easy chair. Just perfect.