

DANA HALL SCHOOL 2009 FACULTY & STAFF SUMMER READING BIBLIOGRAPHY

DOGS

The Art of Racing in the Rain, Garth Stein

If you've ever wondered what your dog is thinking, Stein's third novel offers an answer. Enzo is a lab terrier mix plucked from a farm outside Seattle to ride shotgun with race car driver Denny Swift as he pursues success on the track and off. Denny meets and marries Eve, has a daughter, Zoë, and risks his savings and his life to make it on the professional racing circuit. Enzo, frustrated by his inability to speak and his lack of opposable thumbs, watches Denny's old racing videos, coins koanlike aphorisms that apply to both driving and life, and hopes for the day when his life as a dog will be over and he can be reborn a man. When Denny hits an extended rough patch, Enzo remains his most steadfast if silent supporter (*Publishers Weekly*). In his review of the book, author Wally Lamb says, "I savored Garth Stein's *The Art of Racing in the Rain* for many reasons: a dog who speaks, the thrill of competitive racing, a heart-tugging storyline, and--best of all--the fact that it is a meditation on humility and hope in the face of despair."

Dog Man: An Uncommon Life on a Faraway Mountain, Martha Sherrill

One day in 1944, in the midst of World War II Japan, with people suffering and starving around him, Morie Sawataishi heard something troubling. The country people of Akita Prefecture were killing their dogs and selling their pelts to the military in order to line the winter coats of officers. The Akita dog, already dwindling in numbers as it fell out of favor, neared extinction. When an acquaintance offered him a puppy, Morie could not resist buying her and later purchased a male for breeding after he was able to verify the existence of only 16 other Akita dogs. Sherrill tells the story not only of the salvation of an ancient breed of dog but also of the complicated man who loved them and of his Tokyo-born wife, who had to learn country ways and how to love dogs. Throughout the book, the changes in postwar Japan are woven into the narrative, along with tales of Morie's Akitas. (Nancy Bent, *Booklist*)

GOOD AND EVIL

The Good Thief, Hannah Tinti

Ren doesn't know how he lost his hand, who his parents are, or how he arrived at St. Anthony's, a prisonlike orphanage. Certain that no one will ever adopt him, he takes secret revenge on those who beat and torment him by stealing. Then Benjamin Nab appears, claiming Ren as his long-lost younger brother. Off they go, and Ren, a marvelously plucky narrator, is ecstatic. But his savior turns out to be a con man given to diabolical and grotesque endeavors. It's a ghoulish and violent world right out of the most nihilistic fairy tales, with shades of Dickens and *Deadwood*. Set in a decimated nineteenth-century New England town ruled by the owner of a mousetrap factory, Tinti's shivery tale features an otherworldly cast of characters. Each is caught in a snare of some sort and must figure out how to get free. In Tinti's highly original debut novel, she renders the horrors and wonders she concocts utterly believable and rich in implication as she creates a darkly comedic and bewitching, sinister yet life-affirming tale about the eternal battle between good and evil. (Donna Seaman, *Booklist*)

Someone Knows My Name, Lawrence Hill

Stunning, wrenching and inspiring, the fourth novel by Canadian novelist Hill spans the life of Aminata Diallo, born in Bayo, West Africa, in 1745. The novel opens in 1802, as Aminata is wooed in London to the cause of British abolitionists, and begins reflecting on her life. Kidnapped at the age of 11 by British slavers, Aminata survives the Middle Passage and is reunited in South Carolina with Chekura, a boy from a village near hers. Her story gets entwined with his, and with those of her owners: nasty indigo producer Robinson Appleby and, later, Jewish duty inspector Solomon Lindo. During her long life of struggle, she does what she can to free herself and others from slavery, including learning to read and teaching others to, and befriending anyone who can help her, black or white. Hill handles the pacing and tension masterfully, particularly during the beginnings of the American Revolution, when the British promise to free Blacks who fight for the British: Aminata's related, eventful travels to Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone follow. In depicting a woman who survives history's most trying conditions through force of intelligence and personality, Hill's book is a harrowing, breathtaking tour de force. (*Publishers Weekly*)

LOOKING AT OURSELVES

The Narcissism Epidemic, Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell

"The other night, when I was reading Twenge and Campbell's excellent and timely new book, my husband was busy framing a fake *Sports Illustrated* cover, with a picture of our seven-year old over the caption, "Player of the Year." *The Narcissism Epidemic* will hew close to the bone, rouse, and provoke many readers as it shines a spotlight on an important—and highly costly—trend in our lives. Rooted in hard data and illuminated with revealing anecdotes, stories, and solutions, *The Narcissism Epidemic* is both a pleasure and an education. But enough about this book. Let's talk about me." (Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want*)

Seeking Peace: Chronicles of the Worst Buddhist in the World, Mary Pipher

Pipher's account of being the worst Buddhist in the world—driven, anxious, self-blaming—is hard to put down with its smooth, compact, and insightful prose. In this quest describing a quest, best-selling Pipher describes how, after spending her life developing relationships to fend off her dark loneliness, she found that she possessed the wrong psychological makeup for public life when fame thrust her out of her support system and into an exhausting whirlwind of appearances. The woman with only two speeds—on and off—had never learned to pace herself, and instead excoriated herself for failings real and imagined. Only after her inability to disappoint others became a disaster, and she felt both totally naked and utterly hidden, could she take a first step toward self-reclamation: simplify. Time in seclusion spent petting her cat and exploring yoga and massage led her to the age-old healing found in familiar homey routines, and in laughter. Captivated by the concept of mindfulness and becoming a bird whose wings are compassion and awareness, Pipher found self-accepting peace through Buddhist meditation and in writing this absorbing chronicle of discovery. (Whitney Scott, *Booklist*)

MYSTERY HISTORY

Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon, David Grann

In 1925, renowned British explorer Col. Percy Harrison Fawcett embarked on a much publicized search to find the city of Z, site of an ancient Amazonian civilization that may or may not have existed. Fawcett, along with his grown son Jack, never returned, but that didn't stop countless others,

including actors, college professors and well-funded explorers from venturing into the jungle to find Fawcett or the city. Among the wannabe explorers is Grann, a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, who has bad eyes and a worse sense of direction. He became interested in Fawcett while researching another story, eventually venturing into the Amazon to satisfy his all-consuming curiosity about the explorer and his fatal mission. Largely about Fawcett, the book examines the stranglehold of passion as Grann's vigorous research mirrors Fawcett's obsession with uncovering the mysteries of the jungle. By interweaving the great story of Fawcett with his own investigative escapades in South America and Britain, Grann provides an in-depth, captivating character study that has the relentless energy of a classic adventure tale. (*Publishers Weekly*)

People of the Book, Geraldine Brooks

One of the earliest Jewish religious volumes to be illuminated with images, the Sarajevo Haggadah survived centuries of purges and wars thanks to people of all faiths who risked their lives to safeguard it. Brooks has turned the intriguing but sparsely detailed history of this precious volume into an emotionally rich, thrilling fictionalization that retraces its turbulent journey. In the hands of Hanna Heath, an impassioned rare-book expert restoring the manuscript in 1996 Sarajevo, it yields clues to its guardians and whereabouts: an insect wing, a wine stain, salt crystals, and a white hair. While readers experience crucial moments in the book's history through a series of fascinating, fleshed-out short stories, Hanna pursues its secrets scientifically, and finds that some interests will still risk everything in the name of protecting this treasure. A complex love story, thrilling mystery, vivid history lesson, and celebration of the enduring power of ideas, *People of the Book* will surely be hailed as one of the best of 2008. (Mari Malcolm, *Amazon.com*)

SUCCESS

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, Carol Dweck

Mindset is "an established set of attitudes held by someone," says the *Oxford American Dictionary*. It turns out, however, that a set of attitudes needn't be so set, according to Dweck, professor of psychology at Stanford. Dweck proposes that everyone has either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. A fixed mindset is one in which you view your talents and abilities as...well, fixed. In other words, you are who you are, your intelligence and talents are fixed, and your fate is to go through life avoiding challenge and failure. A growth mindset, on the other hand, is one in which you see yourself as fluid, a work in progress. Your fate is one of growth and opportunity. Which mindset do you possess? Dweck provides a checklist to assess yourself and shows how a particular mindset can affect all areas of your life, from business to sports and love. The good news, says Dweck, is that mindsets are not set: at any time, you can learn to use a growth mindset to achieve success and happiness. Dweck's overall assertion that rigid thinking benefits no one, least of all yourself, and that a change of mind is always possible and welcome. (*Publishers Weekly*)

Outliers, Malcolm Gladwell

Now that he's gotten us talking about the viral life of ideas and the power of gut reactions, Malcolm Gladwell poses a more provocative question: why do some people succeed, living remarkably productive and impactful lives, while so many more never reach their potential? Challenging our cherished belief of the "self-made man," he makes the democratic assertion that superstars don't arise out of nowhere, propelled by genius and talent: "they are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden

advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot." Examining the lives of outliers from Mozart to Bill Gates, he builds a convincing case for how successful people rise on a tide of advantages, "some deserved, some not, some earned, some just plain lucky." *Outliers* can be enjoyed for its bits of trivia, like why most pro hockey players were born in January, how many hours of practice it takes to master a skill, why the descendents of Jewish immigrant garment workers became the most powerful lawyers in New York, how a pilots' culture impacts their crash record, how a centuries-old culture of rice farming helps Asian kids master math. But there's more to it than that. Throughout all of these examples--and in more that delve into the social benefits of lighter skin color, and the reasons for school achievement gaps--Gladwell invites conversations about the complex ways privilege manifests in our culture. He leaves us pondering the gifts of our own history, and how the world could benefit if more of our kids were granted the opportunities to fulfill their remarkable potential. (Mari Malcolm, *Amazon.com*)

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