

TOPICS OFFERED FOR SUMMER 2012

*Please note that the books listed for each course are only possible candidates.
Do not buy any until the pre-meeting and a decision on the common reading is made.
Classes start May 1st and end August 31st.
Holiday periods are adapted to by individual class voting.*

1. (AOA) AGE OF AUSTERITY

A bitter struggle over limited resources has enveloped political discourse at every level in the United States. Fights over health care, unemployment benefits, funding for mortgage write-downs, economic stimulus legislation—and, at the local level, over cuts in police protection, garbage collection, and in the number of teachers—have dominated the debate. Elected officials face zero-sum choices—or worse, choices with no winners. As austerity raises the stakes for partisanship, Democrats and Republicans, both now minority parties with only about 1/3 of the electorate supporting each, cocoon themselves in their own narrow ideologies, each seeming to fall further behind each year. America now finds itself choosing between two very different paths to the future: one favoring a European-style, high-tax, redistributionist arrangement and the other aiming at a smaller government, lower taxes, and relative laissez-faire.

The major issues of the next few years—long-term deficit reduction; entitlement reform, notably of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid; major cuts in defense spending; and difficulty in financing a continuation of American international involvement—suggest that your-gain-is-my-loss politics will inevitably intensify.

This S/DG will explore the economic and political choices facing us, including whether or not either of the two major parties offer a workable potential solution.

Common Reading: *The Age of Austerity – How Scarcity Will Remake American Politics*, by Thomas Byrne Edsall (2012)

Supplemental Reference: *Limits to Growth – the 40 Year Update* (2012)

2. (BRN) HOW YOUR BRAIN WORKS... AND HOW TO MAKE IT WORK BETTER

How do we learn? What exactly do sleep and stress do to our brains? Why is it so easy to forget and so important to repeat new knowledge? How do brains of men and women differ? Does our visual sense trump all other senses? How does our thinking affect how we make decisions for ourselves and for the world? These and numerous other topics will be explored in this S/DG. We will learn about how the brain works and how to get the most out of it. For example memory, an act we take for granted, is a deep mystery that we still don't understand. We will show that knowing how your brain functions is part of knowing yourself. If you want to understand your brain and improve it, then this S/DG is for you. Presentations can be based on recent advances in brain science and brain psychology. Examples are (1) neuropsychiatrist Dr. Eric Kandel (known for his research on the physiological basis of memory storage in neurons and the book *In Search of*

Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind), and (2) the work of noted psychologist Dr. Daniel Kahneman (known for his work on psychology of judgment and decision-making and the best-selling book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*).

Common Reading: *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School*, by John Medina (2008)

[Go to <http://www.brainrules.net/> for further information.]

3. (CAN) 20TH CENTURY CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Do you like to observe and analyze the human race? Ever wonder why cultures around the world behave differently, or why they believe different things? Then perhaps there's a bit of the cultural anthropologist in you. If so, this is the course for you.

In the late 1800's, Social Darwinism was a popular way to look at the world. European thinkers assumed their culture was naturally superior to that of the "primitive races." Scholars in the US, too, did their part in promoting racist theories of cultural variations, and supported such things as the eugenics movement. In the 20th Century, along came Franz Boas, Father of American Anthropology and a Columbia University professor, who turned such thinking on its head by assuming the fundamental dignity of all men and by professionalizing the field of cultural anthropology. Boas developed the concept of "cultural relativism." His science was so persuasive and his influence so great that by the end of his career practically every department of anthropology in the country was headed or strongly influenced by one his students. They include: Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Melville Herskovitz, Zora Neale Hurston, and Alfred Kroeber (who started Berkeley's anthropology program). Cultures that they have studied include: Samoans, Eskimos, Jewish cultures, native tribes of the American Southwest and Puerto Rican peasants. Other notable folks who pop up in this story are Claude Levi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz.

Besides exploring Boas' controversial ideas, the course will cover subsequent groundbreaking work done in areas such as:

- the function of language in a culture
- gender roles in society
- folklore and African American culture
- the significance of mythology
- culture and personality
- sex and temperament
- pollution (personal uncleanliness) and cleansing rituals
- the politics and funding behind anthropological research

Common Reading: *Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists*, by Jerry D. Moore

The class coordinator has a long & rich list of possible presentation topics and supplemental readings.

4. (CCC) CAVES, CASTLES AND CUISINE OF FRANCE

This S/DG course looks at the history of Southern France which has been part of history for over 40,000 years - from the Cro-Magnon cave dweller to the fiercely independent Celts to the Roman Empire to the Romantic medieval knights to the magnificent cathedrals built to counteract the criticisms of the Roman church. The area was also home to creative artists and to philosophers who inspired two great revolutions.

France is the most ethnically diverse country in Europe and it takes pride in its philosophy, literature, politics, economics, art, film, food and fashion. 75 million people visit France each year – more than other country.

Possible presentation topics include:

- Cro-Magnon cave paintings of 30,000 years ago in Lascaux & Pech Merle.
- Celtic settlements in Languedoc (2500 BC – 125 BC).
- Early Roman Gaul (52 BC –100 CE) – Aix, Arles & Nimes - Julius Caesar; Vercingetorix;
- Rocamadour: St. Amadour; Roland and his sword Durendal.
- Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II; (12th c)
- Carcassonne (1208): stronghold of the Cathars until it fell to de Montfort.
- The 100 year war in the Dordogne – Agincourt & Castillon (15th c)
- Albi and the Albigensian Crusade (13th c)
- St. Cecilia's cathedral in Albi

Common Reading: *Cambridge Illustrated History of France*, by Colin Jones (May 1999)

5. (CTG) CATHERINE THE GREAT, PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Robert Massie returns with another masterpiece of narrative biography, the extraordinary story of an obscure young German princess who traveled to Russia at fourteen and rose to become one of the most remarkable, powerful, and captivating women in history.

Born into a minor noble family, Catherine transformed herself into Empress of Russia by sheer determination. Possessing a brilliant mind and an insatiable curiosity as a young woman, she devoured the works of Enlightenment philosophers and, when she reached the throne, attempted to use their principles to guide her rule of the vast and backward Russian empire.

Possible topics for further research and discussion could include: Voltaire, Diderot, Frederick the Great, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, Marie Antoinette, the American naval hero, John Paul Jones, all of whom she corresponded with.

Common Reading: *Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman*
by Robert K. Massie (2011)

6. (DET) FROM MISS MARPLE TO KINSEY MILLHONE: WOMEN DETECTIVES IN FICTION

A perfect class for those who love “who dun its!” Participants will explore mystery stories by various authors whose main character is a Female Detective. Each member will select one such protagonist and present research on the female detective, the biographical information of the author, and a short analysis of the various mystery novels featuring the character, to include the times and the setting and “what makes it work.” Such characters might include Mrs. Watson (Arthur Conan Doyle), Miss Marple (Agatha Christie), Kinsey Millhone (Sue Grafton), Maisie Dobbs (Jacqueline Winspear), Nancy Drew (Edward Stratemeyer), Dr. Temperance Brennan (Kathy Reichs), Lisbeth Salander (Stieg Larsson), V.I Warshawski (Sara Paretsky), Sister Fidelma (Peter Tremayne), Mrs. Pollifax (Dorothy Gilman). In additional time outside of class, the group may even choose to view some TV shows featuring female detectives to round out their exploration of this genre.

No Common Reading.

7. (DKN) A DICKENSIAN AFFAIR

2012 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens. One of the grand masters of Victorian literature, Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, in Landport, Portsea, England. This S/DG will focus on the writings of this famous British author by reading two of the most beloved works in English literature, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations* that are combined in one common reading. In addition to discussing each novel the members will research the life of this author, the historic times in which he lived, the social situation of London at this time and reference his other works and the main characters he brought to life.

Common Reading: *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectation*

8. (DOC) THE DOCUMENTARY MOVIE

Not long ago, if you wanted to see a documentary film, you probably had to take a course, go to a movie festival, or catch it on PBS. But the commercial success of recent documentaries has changed all that...nowadays you may have to stand in line to get a ticket to such popular "docs" as *March of the Penguins*, *Bowling for Columbine*, *Supersize Me*, etc. While your basic Hollywood studio movie is primarily made to make money, a documentary is the expression of its creator's personal passion. This S/DG will explore the world of modern masters of the documentary. Presenters will choose a film that class members can view at home before each class session, and discuss the director's purpose, the film's techniques, and its effect on public opinion. Documentary films are available at public libraries, and via Netflix, which stocks over 300 such films in 28 different genres, ranging from biographies (Marlon Brando) to history (the Alamo), travel/adventure, and - - most fascinating -- Miscellaneous.

No Common Reading.

9. (ECN) THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF OUTSOURCING AND GLOBALIZATION

What are the forces driving the emigration of our manufacturing base and the determining factors as to where it goes? The most common argument has been that this is driven by the lower wages in other countries but this does not seem to explain the entire process. For example Germany has kept their industry at home with very high wages. Also, foreign companies seem to have no problem establishing themselves in the U.S. with high wages. All political candidates are offering explanations of various sorts as to why this has happened and how to bring manufacturing jobs back to the U.S.

This S/DG will explore and debate the economic, political, and social issues underlying globalization. Members will address such questions as:

- What are likely outsourcing destinations and what are the driving factors?
- What would motivate a company to bring back their manufacturing plants back to the U.S.?
- Is it possible to reverse the outsourcing trend?
- Why do some foreign companies set up manufacturing plants in the U.S.?
- How can we thrive in the new environment?
- Are the benefits of an increasingly global economy worth the costs?
- Were the “great recession,” financial meltdown of 2008-09 and the ongoing euro crisis consequences of globalization or conflicting national financial regulatory regimes, both or neither?

Our common reading discusses such issues from a broad perspective. The supplemental references (which might be obtained from libraries) illustrate the vigorous debates that have been waged over globalization and the arguments put forth.

Common Reading: *Globalization/Anti-Globalization: Beyond the Great Divide* by David Held & Anthony McGrew (2007)

Supplemental References:

Economics Does Not Lie – A Defense of the Free Market in a Time of Crisis, by Guy Sorman (2009). This book sheds light on the intellectual arguments being waged on a number of economic topics, including globalization, and who is on which sides of these arguments. This is illustrated by the following three books:

In Defense of Globalization, by Jagdish Bhagwati (2004)

The Globalization Paradox, by Dani Rodrick (2011)

Globalization and Its Discontents, by Joseph E. Stiglitz (2003)

10. (ELE) THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 2012

All general elections are very important for America and its citizens. The upcoming one this year seems to have more issues critical for our general welfare. Moreover there are substantially large differences in the approaches that the two major parties propose for resolving them. This S/DG will address a wide range of topics to help us better understand general elections and this one in particular. We will look at election processes, such as nomination (caucuses, straw polls, registering voters, role of Superpacs, grassroots

organizations, etc.) and campaigning (debates, money raising, special interest lobbying, getting out the vote, etc.) and we examine the critical issues whose resolution determine our future (healthcare, energy policy, transportation, foreign policy, taxation (e.g., what does “fair share” mean?, etc.). We will explore these topics through member research, presentation and frank but polite discussion. We do this to arrive at informed individual decisions for this November’s election – recognizing that our exercise of these voting rights have made our constitutional republic so unique in the world.

Common Reading: *The Everything American Government Book: From the Constitution to Present-Day Elections, All You Need to Understand Our Democratic System*, by Nick Ragone (Adams Media; June 4, 2004)

11. (EUR) WHAT’S GOING ON IN EUROPE?

According to Wikipedia “ The EURO is the second largest reserve currency as well as the second most traded currency in the world after the United States dollar. As of July 2011, with nearly €90 billion in circulation, the euro has the highest combined value of banknotes and coins in circulation in the world, having surpassed the U.S. dollar. Based on International Monetary Fund estimates of 2008 GDP and purchasing power parity among the various currencies, the eurozone is the second largest economy in the world.”

But since 2009 the Euro has been at the heart of the European debt crisis which has turned Greece, Portugal, and Spain into euro-destroying economic disaster areas. What is the future of the EURO, of the European Union? What does failure of the Euro mean to the United States where we have seen our stock markets bounce up and down at every new change in the debt crisis? Asia has not been immune to monetary fluctuations in relation to the EURO. Where is the EURO going? What’s in the future for Europe? For the U.S.? For China?

This S/DG will look at the history of the EURO, the European debt crisis and their effects on the world economy.

Common Reading: *The End of the EURO; the Uneasy Future of the European Union* by Johan Van Overtveldt (November 2011)

12. (GAR) GARDENS: BOTANY, EMPIRE, AND THE BIRTH OF AN OBSESSION

This class will explore the birth of the world's obsession with plants and gardens.

The book, *The Brother Gardeners* by Andrea Wulf brings to life the fascinating story of the science and adventure of eighteenth-century plant collecting. It tells how six men created the modern garden and changed the horticultural world in the process. These men formed the nucleus of the botany movement, which included Swedish botanist and taxonomist Carl Linnaeus; Philip Miller, best-selling author of the *Gardener's Dictionary*; and Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, two botanist explorers who scoured the globe for plant life aboard Captain Cook's *Endeavour*. These "brother gardeners" shared a wild passion for plants. As they cultivated exotic blooms from around the world, they helped make Britain an epicenter of horticulture and botanical expertise.

There are many possible areas for further research and discussion; Kew Gardens, Chelsea Gardens, The Development of Plant Taxonomy, Botanical Engravings, Plant Classification, Gardening Then and Now, Carl Linnaeus, famous landscape designers, famous gardens, greenhouses, and many others.

Common Reading: *The Brother Gardeners; Botany, Empire, and the Birth of an Obsession*, by Andrea Wulf (2008)

13. (GDS) GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT IS SUCCEEDING

As the income gap between developed and developing nations grows, so grows the cacophony of voices claiming that the quest to find a simple recipe for economic growth has failed. In fact, there is good news about global progress. In our common reading economist Charles Kenny argues against development naysayers by pointing to the evidence of widespread improvements in health, education, peace, liberty--and even happiness. Average worldwide income, at \$10,600, is 25% higher than it was a decade ago. Thanks to increases in agricultural efficiency, cereal production grew at double the rate of population in the developing world. Vaccine initiatives have helped cut the death rate from common diseases like measles by 60%. Child mortality is down 17%. One of the many factors behind these improvements was increased telecommunications (especially television) in Africa and Asia: education and better health practices could penetrate communities where illiteracy and geographic isolation long stymied public-health efforts. This resulted in hundreds of millions of people who were better educated, more politically engaged and more aware of social and health issues, creating a virtuous cycle of progress. Also, crime has declined in the USA and violence has diminished worldwide. Kenny shows that by understanding this transformation, we can make the world an even better place to live. That's not to say that life is grand for everyone, or that we don't have a long way to go. But improvements have spread far, and, according to Kenny, they can spread even further.

This S/DG will explore how the conditions of life have improved around the world and what might be done to make further progress.

Common Reading: *Getting Better: Why Global Development Is Succeeding--And How We Can Improve the World Even More*, by Charles Kenny (2011)

14. (GRC) THE GREAT ROMANTIC COMPOSERS

The Romantic Period spans most of the 19th Century from about 1820 to 1910. The central premise of Romanticism is that an exploration of emotions, the imagination and intuition leads to a more nuanced understanding of the arts. It was a period of heightened interest in nature with an emphasis on the individual's expression of emotion and imagination, and a departure from the attitudes and forms of classicism. The Romantic Period saw the creation and evolution of new musical genres such as the program symphony, pioneered by Beethoven and further developed by Hector Berlioz; its offshoot, the symphonic poem was developed by Franz Liszt; the concert overture, examples of which were composed by Felix Mendelssohn and virtually every composer thereafter; and short, expressive piano pieces written for the bourgeois salons of Europe by Robert Schumann and Frédéric Chopin. Italian operas were composed in the Bel canto traditions,

and these led directly to the masterworks of Giuseppe Verdi, while the idea of the German music drama was established by Richard Wagner.

We will study and analyze the life and works of some of the major composers of the period to better understand the stories and ideas underlying their compositions. Each member of the S/DG will select a composer from this period and discuss his life, his works and the relationship of his work to the Romantic

Possible Presentation topics: Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Wagner, Verdi, Smetana, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, Grieg, Rimsky-Korsakov, Elgar, Mahler, Richard Strauss.

No Common Reading.

15. (HOM) AT HOME: HISTORY OF PRIVATE LIFE

In his book, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*, Bill Bryson uses his house and the everyday items within it --things like ice, cookbooks, glass windows, and salt and pepper—to examine how they transformed the way people lived, and how houses evolved around these new commodities. In the process, he unearths 10,000 years of fascinating historical information and extraordinary stories about what is behind, within and covering the walls of the common home.

As we journey through the book, the class will look at how everything we take for granted from comfortable furniture to smoke-free air, went from unimaginable luxury in its day to humdrum routine expectations for today.

Presentations could cover areas relating to the many components of a home ranging from ancient to modern plumbing; food travel and refrigeration; yards and landscaping; energy use and changes; clothing, wardrobes and closet space; water; and not only the individual items – but the processes of creating the product.

Common Reading: *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*, by Bill Bryson (2010, reprint 2011)

16. (HTH) HEALTHCARE REFORM: STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION

It has been two years since the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) was passed. This act is considered by many to be a landmark law, on a par with the Social Security Act of 1935 and the Medicare and Medicaid law in 1965. Whether or not one likes it, it is helpful to understand it, as it affects every American. Few rules have been implemented while others are slowly unfolding. The individual mandate (on the Supreme Court's agenda this year) and the mandate for insurance companies to provide coverage for those with preexisting conditions – won't be implemented before 2014. The Congress passing ACA committed to pay for the bill and to use it as part of deficit reduction - it is now officially tied to the nation's economy. Whether or not this reform will slow the growth of health care costs remains the dominate issue in Congress. For most Americans the issues are – am I going to have to pay more?; will my benefits be cut? For others it

may be life-saving. The ACA is over 2000 pages. This is the latest chapter in “American Health Care reform – “a unique struggle” that spans 100 years.

This S/DG will review the 100 year struggle of successful and failed efforts to pass health care legislation. The focus will be an examination and discussion of the 10 Titles contained within the ACA, what they are expected to change, and whether or not these new rules will have the desired effect on the three domains of health care policy: access, quality and cost.

Common Reading: *Inside National Health Reform*, by John McDonough (Sept. 2011; DPH California/Milbank Books on Health & the Public)

17. (LAL) THE LITERATURE OF LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles is a city that is daydreamed about or damned through history in both fiction and fact. From the boosters and the boasters to view of the mean streets fiction writers have told us about our city. Characters include Hollywood winners and losers, surfers and religious cult leaders, hero private detectives and crooked cops, sleazy private detectives and hero cops. There are many writers to do presentations on from Helen Hunt Jackson to Joan Disdain or Upton Sinclair to Thomas Pynchon. Of course there are the mystery writers such Raymond Chandler, Michael Connelly and Walter Mosley. David Fine, an emeritus professor of English from CSULB, has written a well-regarded book on the subject.

Common Reading: *Imagining Los Angeles, A City in Fiction*, by David Fine (Aug. 2004)

18. (MOR) THE MORMON PEOPLE

As we enter the fray of political machinations in preparation for the presidential elections, we find a variety of candidates surfacing from various life experiences. Some candidates follow a Mormon religious tradition. This S/DG presents an opportunity to learn the history of this religion and its role in the modern world, as seen by its followers. Using the recently published book, *The Mormon People* by Matthew Mowan, the group will read a crisp, engaging account of the religion’s history from its founding to the present day. Members will do research and presentations on various aspects and famous key people.

Common Reading: *The Mormon People*, by Matthew Bowman (January 2012)

19. (MRL) MORAL CLARITY

How do we talk responsibly about good and evil? What does realism really mean? How are morality and religion connected? Our book, *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown-Up Idealists*, (Princeton University Press paperback, 2009) by Susan Neiman, a moral philosopher, resurrects a moral vocabulary to steer us clear of the dogmas of the right and the helpless pragmatism of the left. “Susan Neiman’s profound wisdom, courage, and a vision give us a public conception of goodness and a reinvigorated progressive vision that will resonate with the religious while remaining thoroughly secular and democratic. She is a beacon of light and hope in our morally debased times.” (Cornell West, author of

Democracy Matters). Presentations may address any of the moral issues of our times, and present alternative views from the author's.

Common Reading: *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown-Up Idealists*, by Susan Neiman (2009)

20. (MSP) MOSCOW & ST. PETERSBURG: ART, LIFE & CULTURE, 1900-1920

The Russian "Silver Age" in Moscow and St. Petersburg during the first two decades of the 20th century represents one of the most significant centers in the development of Modernism. The galaxy of names associated with this period includes: Vaslav Nijinsky, Sergey Diaghilev, Igor Stravinsky, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Anna Akhmatova, Marc Chagall, Natalia Goncharova, Vasili Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, and Vsevolod Meyerhold. And these are just the names that are known in the West. There were also innovators in music, literature, art, ballet and modern dance with whose names we may not be familiar but whose creativity will open our eyes to cultural diamonds that we are still not acquainted with. All this occurs against a background described by the author of our common reading as "illuminated perhaps more by the rays of the setting sun than by the cold light of dawn, and if witnesses recognized the creative upsurge of their time, they also tinged their enthusiasm with unease, foreboding, and a sense of reckoning."

Common Reading: *Moscow & St. Petersburg 1900-1920: Art, Life & Culture of the Russian Silver Age*, by John E. Bowlt (2008)

21. (SOC) SOCIAL REVOLUTION – WHEN PEOPLE DEMAND CHANGE

This S/DG will examine the revolutionary changes brought about by public action. The discussions would involve the bottom-up common denominators that precipitate these movements: from peaceful mass protests to political action to armed resistance. Some possible topics for presentations would be Vietnam War protests, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Egyptian internet- inspired revolution, the overthrow of the Tsar, the end of apartheid, or the civil rights march on Washington. We might even take a look at the "Occupy" movement, the Tea Party and the Arab Spring.

Common Reading: *Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is Greater than the People in Power: A Memoir*, by Wael Ghonim (January 17, 2012)

22. (SVS) WAR OF WORLDVIEWS, SCIENCE VS. SPIRITUALITY

Whether you tend to see the world through the eyes of science or spirituality, these incisive, insightful essays will stimulate your thinking regarding two opposing world views! Best-selling authors, Deepak Chopra, articulate advocate of spirituality, and Leonard Mlodinow, prominent physicist, first met in a televised Caltech debate. Our text is the product of that encounter and the respectful clash of world views that grew along with their friendship. We will choose specific chapters for stimulating discussion and presentations such as: "How did the Universe Emerge?", "Is the Universe Conscious?", "What is the Nature of Time?", and "What is the Connection Between Mind and Brain?". Come join us!

Common Reading: *War of Worldviews, Science Vs. Spirituality*, by Deepak Chopra and Leonard Mlodinow (2011)

23. (WRI) THE WRITING MIND

This S/DG concentrates on fostering creativity and improving techniques of the writer through the production of original pieces of writing, literary critique and presentations by each group member.

Our interest is in writing original pieces of fiction, non-fiction, essays, poetry, etc. and supporting each other in discussion and critique of our work to improve our efforts. As members of Omnilore, we make Presentations on literary topics and on the philosophy, subtleties or techniques of writing. Presentations on famous writers are to concentrate on influences on the writer, style and techniques used, not just on biography. Primary interest for presentations is on the craft of writing. We know that many Omniloreans are interested in family history and autobiography and we welcome them.

Each member will be responsible for;

1. a Presentation, as described;
2. two submissions: original fiction, non-fiction, poetry, essay or other form of writing (autobiography, family history, etc.).
3. for reading and critiquing submissions from other group members.

We welcome new members who share our interest in writing.

Common Reading: None Suggested

24. (WST) THE CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAN WEST

In the summer of 1846, the Army of the West marched through Santa Fe, en route to invade and occupy the Western territories claimed by Mexico. Fuelled by the new ideology of “Manifest Destiny,” this land grab would lead to a decades-long battle between the United States and the Navajos, the fiercely resistant rulers of a huge swath of mountainous desert wilderness.

In *Blood and Thunder*, Hampton Sides gives us a magnificent history of the American conquest of the West. At the center of this sweeping tale is Kit Carson, the trapper, scout, and soldier whose adventures made him a legend. Sides shows us how this illiterate mountain man understood and respected the Western tribes better than any other American, yet willingly followed orders that would ultimately devastate the Navajo nation.

Rich in detail and spanning more than three decades, this is an essential addition to our understanding of how the West was really won.

Common Reading: *Blood and Thunder: The Epic Story of Kit Carson and the Conquest of the American West*, by Hampton Sides (2006)

25. (WTS) WILLIAM TREVOR SHORT STORIES

William Trevor, KBE, (born 24 May 1928) is an Irish author and playwright. Over the course of his long career he has written several novels and hundreds of short stories. He is best-known for his short stories.. He has won the Whitbread Prize three times and has

been nominated four times for the Booker Prize, most recently for his novel *Love and Summer* (2009). Tim Adams, a staff writer for *The Observer* described him as "widely believed to be the most astute observer of the human condition currently writing in fiction." "Trevor is probably the greatest living writer of short stories in the English language.." - *The New Yorker*.

Trevor has written several collections of short stories that were well-received. His short stories often follow a Chekhovian pattern. The characters in Trevor's work are usually marginalized members of society: children, old people, single middle-aged men and women, or the unhappily married. Those who cannot accept the reality of their lives create their own alternative worlds into which they retreat. A number of the stories use elements of the Gothic convention to explore the nature of evil and its connection with madness. Trevor has acknowledged the influence of James Joyce on his short-story writing, and "the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal" can be detected in his work, but the overall impression is not of gloominess, since, particularly in the early work, the author's wry humor offers the reader a tragicomic version of the world. He has adapted much of his work for stage, television and radio.

You will find that one reason that short story S/DGs are so popular is the fascinating differences in interpretation by your presenters and classmates.

Common Reading: *William Trevor: The Collected Stories*