

# 2009 Senior Class Book Recommendations

*A Gift from Colby Faculty,  
Staff, and Administrators to the  
Graduating Class of 2009*



Colby

Waterville, Maine



# 2009

## Senior Class Book Recommendations

### **Martha Arterberry**

Professor of Psychology

*Blonde Roots*, Bernardine Evaristo

Evaristo challenges us to consider a reversal of Europeans and Africans in the history of slavery. Read it!

*Written on the Body*, Jeanette Winterson

A story about the pleasure and pain of love. Truly engaging from the first page but mysterious throughout.

### **Joseph E. Atkins**

Visiting Assistant Professor of Psychology; Coordinator of  
Multicultural Student Programs and Support

*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*,

Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD

With the election of its first African-American president, America stands at the threshold of a new era. In order to bridge the gaps centuries of racial stereotypes have created, we need to understand the development of racial identity and how it manifests itself in our college communities. Beverly Tatum explores this topic from multiple perspectives: her own experiences as a student, as a psychologist, and as the mother of sons developing their own racial identity.

*Maus — A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*, Art

Spiegelman

The unique style and format of this Pulitzer Prize winning book personalized the horror of the Holocaust more than I thought was possible. Amazingly, the characters in this illustrated book come alive in a way that makes them

enduring witnesses to a dark era in history that we would like to, but must never, forget.

**Diana P. Avella**  
Career Counselor

*Right Relationship: Building a Whole Earth Economy*, Peter Brown and Geoffrey Garver

For those of us who read and were influenced by *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn, and have read or are thinking of reading *Deep Economy* by Bill McKibben, this book by a leading environmentalist and an environmental attorney is a good choice. Based on the Quaker principle of “Right Relationship,” Brown and Garver affirm that a relationship is right when it “preserves the integrity, resilience and beauty of the commonwealth of life and wrong when it does otherwise.” Their thesis is that unlimited growth and wealth are unsustainable and they propose a model which will bring our world into alignment with the Earth’s life support systems.

*A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*, Parker Palmer

Parker Palmer has spoken before about listening to the inner voice of vocation in *Let Your Life Speak* and *The Courage to Teach*. This newer book addresses our deep human need to live an undivided life, where our actions in the larger world are consistent with our personal sense of integrity. Given the forces of fragmentation and multitasking, and the insecurities we face daily, the book provides a framework for living fulfilled and sane lives.

**Parker J. Beverage**  
Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid

*The Things They Carried*, Tim O’Brien  
*The Sorrow of War*, Bao Ninh

Every once in a while, quite by chance, I read a pair of books that strike me as especially interesting when read back-to-back. One such pair included *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O’Brien, and *The Sorrow of War*, by Bao Ninh.

*Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer

*A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, Ishmael Beah  
More recently, two books that went well together were *Into the Wild*, by Jon Krakauer, and *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, by Ishmael Beah. Krakauer’s book recounts the saga of an educated, privileged, young man who desperately seeks to rid himself of all that he has in search of a less complicated, perhaps nobler ideal. Beah’s autobiographical account tells of a young boy who loses all that he has — his family, his worldly possessions, and his youth

— to the savagery of war in Sierra Leone and who fights mightily to regain his humanity, sense of self, and place in a civilized society.

### **Adrian Blevins**

Assistant Professor of English [Creative Writing]

*From the Fishhouse: An Anthology of Poems That Sing, Rhyme, Resound, Syncopate, Alliterate, and Just Plain Sound Great*, Camille Dungy, Matt O'Donnell, Jeffery Thompson, with a forward by Gerald Stern.

The dust jacket really says it best: “Derived from the Fishhouse Website ... this anthology ... is a striking example of why poetry is meant not just to be read, but to be read aloud, and is ... the most exciting, portable way to experience the array of poetry being written and performed in the US in the first decade of the twenty-first century.” Comes with a CD!

*Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, Alison Bechdel

Honestly, I was mesmerized. I couldn't put it down. It was like a novel and a poem and an essay and a drawing, all in one: my first graphic novel, and now I can't stop.

*I Hate to See That Evening Sun Go Down*, William Gay

These are amazing stories from Tennessee: funny, odd, dark-thinking, candid. And the prose is so sharp you could cut your finger on it.

### **Robert T. Bluhm Jr.**

Sunrise Professor of Physics

*Warped Passages: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Universe's Hidden Dimensions*, Lisa Randall

This book describes recent ideas in theoretical physics that involve extra spatial dimensions. It can be a little tricky to follow in places, but it is well worth it.

*Black Holes and Time Warps*, Kip S. Thorne

A very good book about general relativity, black holes, and cosmology. It also describes some of the history and people involved in the study of black holes.

*Einstein's Mistakes*, Hans C. Ohanian

Yes, Einstein made lots of mistakes, and some of his published papers are full of errors. It is interesting to read about his false starts and how they were actually an important part of the discovery process for him. I'm not wild about some of the author's remarks or tone in some places, but it is still an interesting book.

**Elizabeth J. Bridger**  
Mailroom Coordinator

*Cry, the Beloved Country*, Alan Paton

A passionate and beautiful story set in South Africa during apartheid: a black man's country under white man's law. After watching *The Color of Friendship* on the Disney Channel, I wondered why this book had been banned in South Africa. So I read it. As should you.

*Strange as This Weather Has Been*, Ann Pancake

A West Virginia family struggles with circumstance and mountaintop mining. I stumbled across this book in Miller Library, drawn in by the cover illustration, "The Agony of Gaia," and the author's name (yes, Pancake is her real name). The land itself is a main character of the story.

*The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Sarah Orne Jewett

The story of love at first sight and a lifelong love affair — not with a person, but with coastal Maine. Dr. Nelson Madore, my Maine History professor, mentioned Sarah Orne Jewett at least once during every class. After reading this story, I understand why she is his favorite Maine author.

**Michael D. Burke**  
Associate Professor of English

*Almanac for Moderns*, Donald Culross Peattie

A fascinating and original take on natural history, from the 1930s.

*Waiting for the Barbarians*, J.M. Coetzee

The definitive novel on apartheid and South Africa.

*Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, James Weldon Johnson

A profound exploration of the existential crisis of race identity in 20th century America.

**Jennifer Coane**  
Assistant Professor of Psychology

*Q*, Luther Blissett

This book is neither "pretty" nor particularly uplifting. It is, however, one of the books that has most stuck with me over the past few years. It will possibly upset you and disgust you at points, but it probably will not leave you untouched. Set during the religious wars that ravaged Europe in the 16th century, *Q* is a disturbing and haunting read that combines irony and history to provide a counterpart to the violent rampages of fanaticism. Written from

multiple perspectives of the main players, the book is both a historical account of the savagery of the era and a reflection on faith, life, and death.

*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Milan Kundera

This book is one of my favorites — although the first time I read it I found it very aversive. A second and third read allowed me to see the complexities and deeper levels woven into the lives of the characters. It provides a framework for thinking about morality and moral behavior and the consequences of choice, decisions, and actions. The contrasts between lightness and heaviness are entwined into human relations, political actions, and philosophical belief systems concerning life, love, and death.

*Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie

I read this years ago — and still think it is Rushdie's most beautiful work. His use of language to create multi-sensory imagery is stunning. The story follows the intersecting lives of children born at the stroke of midnight on the day of India's independence from the British and the growth and birth of a nation is mirrored in the lives and deaths of the main characters. Combining realism with fantasy and magic, this book is a journey, and a splendid one at that.

### **Daniel H. Cohen**

Professor of Philosophy; Christian A. Johnson Professor of Integrative Liberal Learning

*The Schopenhauer Cure*, Irvin D. Yalom

Yalom's earlier novel, *When Nietzsche Wept*, is one of my favorites. It's a wonderful piece of historical fiction in which Freud and Breuer psychoanalyze the distraught Friedrich Nietzsche. Along the way, Yalom does a first-rate job presenting both Freudian and Nietzschean thought. His newest book tackles Schopenhauer's philosophy. A terminally ill counselor and the patient who was his greatest career failure — a deeply troubled Schopenhauer scholar but now an aspiring therapist himself — dance around each other in the tangled context of group therapy sessions.

*The Liar*, Stephen Fry

*The Hippopotamus*, Stephen Fry

These two novels are Fry at his best — and Fry's best is hard to beat. They are relentlessly clever and breathtakingly hilarious, but between the erudite wittiness and the outrageous buffoonery, there is also a deep intelligence running throughout.

### **Susan Westerberg Cole**

Science Librarian

*Forever*, Pete Hamill

This story follows the life of the protagonist from his birth in 18th century Ireland up to the present day where he lives in New York City, since he lives forever. Is this a curse or a blessing? Would you want to live forever, to never grow old? What challenges would that present? Through his life you learn much about the history of New York City and what it was like during the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and other significant times of the city. A fascinating read with some magic thrown in.

*Mistress of the Sun*, Sandra Gulland

I recently finished this and cannot stop thinking about it. A fictional biography of Louise de la Valliere, a mistress of Louis XIV. You should enjoy Gulland's writing if you've an interest in France, European history, or women's lives at Court, and the choices they made within the confines of their time. She weaves in wonderful details of the quotidian life of the 17th century.

**Susan F. Cook**  
Director, Planned Giving

*Longitude: The True Story of the Lone Genius Who Solved the  
Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time*, Dava Sobel

Pride and politics come into play in the search for a method to accurately calculate longitude while on the open sea.

*Waiting for Snow in Havana: Confessions of a Cuban Boy*, Carlos Eire

A memoir written by one of the 14,000 children airlifted out of Cuba in the 1950s. As he describes his boyhood in Havana, and defining moments and memories of life in the U.S., he also comes to grips with the effects of being separated from his parents and making this extraordinary adjustment to his new life.

**Julie W. de Sherbinin**  
Professor of Russian

*A Fine Balance*, Rohinton Mistry

If you liked *Shun Dog Millionaire*, then read a fuller story of the struggles of the marginalized in India, an interwoven tale of several different lives told with humor and depth in beautifully crafted language.

**Linwood C. Downs**  
Assistant Professor of Administrative Science

*1984*, George Orwell

Illustrates the dangers of thought police and the manipulation of language to

maintain power. Also read *Animal Farm*, also by Orwell. Demagoguery used as a useful alternative to a thoughtful discussion.

*Den of Thieves*, James B. Stewart

Good guys gone bad. A cautionary tale for well-educated investment bankers in the 1980's who get seduced by the ease of making money and push the legal envelope to their ultimate downfall. A companion book, *The Predators' Ball* by Connie Bruck overlaps and enhances the story of Michael Milken.

*All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, Robert Fulghum

Title says it all — everything we learn thereafter is just details. A book that gets better with age.

**David T. Eaton**  
Director of Communications

*Once an Eagle*, Anton Myrer

This book is a terrific story of leadership and the importance of one's personal sense of worth, value and morality in a world where compromising them carries significant rewards. The book's message about the importance of personal character is delivered subtly but unmistakably. Myrer's writing is crisp and his storytelling skills superb. I read this book for the first time about ten years ago and make a point of re-reading every year or so.

The Aubrey Maturin Series, Patrick O'Brian

Patrick O'Brian's 20 book series highlighting the friendship and careers of Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin — two officers in the 19th century British navy as they sail the globe fighting Napoleon's navy and assorted others, including, from time to time, each other. The movie *Master and Commander* is an amalgamation of several of O'Brian's volumes, but it simply doesn't do justice to O'Brian's prose nor his encyclopedic knowledge of 18th century naval life. Read one, read a few or read them all — you cannot go wrong.

*The Prize*, Daniel Yergin

A bit slow going at times, Yergin's Pulitzer Prize winning history of oil and the ways it has changed the globe's power structure is a must read for anyone who really wants to understand the globe's struggle with petroleum dependence.

**Joseph A. Feely**  
Visiting Assistant Professor of Art; Supervisor of Special Projects/Architect

*Blood Meridian*, Cormac McCarthy

Probably now 7 or 8 years ago I recommended this book. Having had a

chance to read again it while on vacation this winter, I felt compelled to do so again — it's an amazing book. *Blood Meridian*, a giant step beyond his earlier novels, immediately preceded McCarthy's more well-known Border Trilogy (*All The Pretty Horses*, *The Crossing* and *Cities of the Plain*). The novel is set in the 1840's in the American southwest and northern Mexico. Based on historical fact, the story follows the marauding Glanton Gang as it murders, scalps and plunders its way across a desolate desert landscape. The characters are fascinatingly drawn and about as reprehensible a group of miscreants as one could imagine. McCarthy's writing can be a bit dense at times. But once into it, the book carries you easily from one raw episode and character to another. Check it out on Wikipedia.

*Wasted Vigil*, Naseem Aslan

By the author of *Season of the Rainbirds* and *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Aslan's new novel is set in an eastern province of present-day Afghanistan. Aslan weaves together the lives of five people who, it would seem, could have nothing in common with one another. But, they do and in profound ways. Aslan's writing is wonderful, almost poetic, and he weaves a fascinating tapestry of these five people's lives. An added level of interest are his insights into the forces currently struggling for primacy in that part of the world. An excellent book.

## **James R. Fleming**

### **Professor of Science, Technology, and Society**

ACLS humanities e-book project, Various

From the American Council of Learned Societies, here's an interesting list of 51 humanities e-books on Science and Technology that we use in the STS Program, <http://www.humanitiesebook.org/titlelist.online.au.26.html>. You can get to these lists and read the e-books from the Colby Library page by searching title: ACLS humanities e-book project. Then click on Home/About/Title List to see 27 reading lists comprising about 1,500 titles. (Does this count as 1,500 book recommendations?)

*Critique of Criminal Reason*, Michael Gregorio

Immanuel Kant helps solve a murder in 1804.

*Measuring the World*, Daniel Kehlmann

Mathematical first principles or extensive travel? Carl Friedrich Gauss meets Alexander Von Humboldt in this entertaining historical fiction about two ways of knowing the world.

*My new book manuscript*, Me

Seeing all the "Read" posters in the Library made me want to make a "Write" poster. I would enjoy a weekend in the cabin with the copy edited

manuscript of my next book, some sharp pencils, and a good eraser. I think we should all aspire to authorship.

## **Ellen L. Freeman**

Inst. Technologist

*Nothing Special: Living Zen*, Charlotte J Beck

Beck writes about how to make “living itself a spiritual practice and how to discover that the extraordinary is really nothing special.”

*Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames*, Thich Nhat Hanh

A handbook not only for transforming anger but for living each moment beautifully.

*Un Lun Dun*, China Mieville

An urban adventure with a strong environmental message, the novel reaches back to London’s Great Smog of 1952, which bridges the real and the fantastical. Filled with odd characters — who would have thought a milk carton could be endearing?

## **Robert A. Gastaldo**

Whipple-Coddington Professor of Geology

*The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*, Barbara Tuchman

Okay, so when Tuchman wrote this book our nation was in the midst of the last prolonged conflict and her desire was to demonstrate how, once a policy is set into place and resources have been expended towards accomplishing the goal, human nature prevents us from recognizing the reality of the situation, driving us to failure. The “follies” that she examines, and demonstrates to parallel one another, include the Trojan War, the breakup of the Holy See provoked by the Renaissance Popes, the loss of the American colonies by Britain’s George III, and the United States’ persistent folly in Vietnam. It provides a template for how our current involvement in particular conflict areas of the world may never be resolved as planned.

*Life of Pi*, Yann Martel

I’m equivocal on this book, having read it over some very long air flights abroad and ruminated on its “meaning” from a variety of perspectives. I’ve discussed this with several others who have found it to be evocative, while several have believed the premise that this book will have you believing in God when you’ve finished the novel. It may be that this tale of survival provides some notion as to why human nature requires a divinity in which to believe. With no empirical explanation to account for Pi’s experiences, adrift in the ocean in a raft with a tiger for 227 days, the only recourse is divine intervention.

## APERTURE

Aperture is the quarterly publication of the Aperture Foundation (<http://www.aperture.org/>) where fine photography is mixed with essays on topics ranging from “Women Under Cover” (a photo-essay on women in Islamic countries) to the hopes and dreams of recent immigrants (“The Lams of Ludlow Street”). The Foundation, which is the premier not-for-profit arts institution, is dedicated to advancing fine photography. With profound respect for the integrity of the viewer’s experience and the artist’s vision, Aperture presents to the public the finest photographic images that are faithful to the artist’s intent and to the truth of the subject. These images are conveyed as intended by the artist, uncompromised by commercial motive, marketplace trends, or external censorship. Membership is only \$60 / year.

## **Cheryl Townsend Gilkes**

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Professor of Sociology and African-American Studies

*The Help*, Kathryn Stockett

It will make you angry. It will make you laugh out loud. It will make you angry. It will make you think about who you want to play the roles of Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter in the movie. It will make you wish you knew more about living during the periods of Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement. Most of all, it will make you think about the intersectionality of gender, race, and class in a very new way.

*Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin*, John Hope Franklin

One of the greatest American historians whose classic volume, *From Slavery to Freedom* educated generations of scholars and people of good will about African American history, American history, and the possibilities of social change.

*The Slave Ship: A Human History*, Marcus Rediker

If the economic catastrophes of the past year have made you wonder how far human beings will go to make money at the expense of others, you need to read this book. The book also provides a detailed and painful insight into the economic, social, and cultural origins of the Americas.

*The United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation*, Jonathan Hennessey and Aaron McConnell

This is a wonderful review for those who have read the Constitution and a wonderful companion for those reading the Constitution for the first time. The stories about the Constitution contained in this book remind us that the Constitution’s genius and ideals really do transcend its early flaws. It is

a book that will help us appreciate our wonderful opportunity for learning about governance issues at a time when there is a former professor of constitutional law in the White House.

*The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*, Allen Callahan  
This is the book we used for residence hall book discussions and it is an absolutely elegant piece of scholarship.

**Melissa J. Glenn**  
Assistant Professor of Psychology

*The Cure for Death by Lightning*, Gail Anderson-Dargatz  
I selected this book because it is a beautiful, interesting, and disturbing tale.

*The Wasp Factory*, Iain Banks  
I selected this book because it is an engaging and thought-provoking tale told well, if indeed dark and weird.

*Ringworld*, Larry Niven  
I selected this book because it persists. I still think about it regularly.

**Jill P. Gordon**  
Professor of Philosophy

*The Secret History*, Donna Tartt  
A chilling novel about a small group of Classics majors at a New England liberal arts campus who, by passionately pursuing what they believe will be a genuine experience had by the ancient Greeks, end up committing murder. Tartt has a great feel for the academic and intellectual motivations of her characters, and along the way, she also handles quite deftly the variety of their psychological baggage: class anxiety — both upward and downward mobility; family dysfunction; alcoholism and drug use; and the desires to be accepted and exceptional. Although you know from the first sentence of the book that a murder has been committed, you will be surprised throughout.

*Regulating Aversion: Toleration in the Age of Identity and Empire*,  
Wendy Brown  
Brown, a political theorist, argues that our uses of the term, “toleration,” and our discourse about toleration, function so as to demarcate and create political subjects who must be tolerated and subjects who, from a position of political power, tolerate them. She began the book as a critique of toleration discourse on college and university campuses, but after 9/11, she expanded its scope to include our use of toleration discourse in geopolitical affairs. Her analysis is accessible, including

an account of the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, but nonetheless complex and nuanced. An eye-opening read for anyone who has spent time in the academy, as well as anyone interested in how our language functions as political power, and how toleration language achieves goals of intolerance.

*Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*, Gregory Maguire

Like his famous, *Wicked*, Maguire's *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* takes a well known fairy tale, in this case Cinderella, and reworks it in surprising and compelling ways, revealing the world anew from the viewpoint of one of the original story's minor characters. In 17th century Holland, against all odds and cultural permissibility for women, the smart, talented, and "plain" Iris secretly apprentices for a painter working in the shadow of the Dutch Masters. Meanwhile dire economic circumstances bring beautiful Clara into her life as her stepsister. The ball? The prince? Read it! I loved this book, as well as Maguire's sensibilities about women's lives.

**Todd E. Gordon**  
Asst. Director, Alumni & Donor Relations

*The Last Lecture*, Randy Pausch

*History of God*, Karen Armstrong

*The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* and *Theodore Rex*, Edmund Morris

**Fernando Q. Gouvêa**  
Carter Professor of Mathematics

*The Archimedes Codex*, Reviel Netz and William Noel

The starting point of this book is the unexpected news that, after many decades in unknown hands, a manuscript containing a famous text by Archimedes was going to be put up for auction. The manuscript is a palimpsest: a book made out of parchment leaves that were used for the Archimedes text, then washed and re-used. The auction was the first scene of an exciting story of intellectual discovery. Netz, a specialist in Greek mathematics, and Noel, the curator of manuscripts at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, were directly involved in working with the manuscript. The story is fascinating and they tell it well.

*The Best of Gene Wolfe*, Gene Wolfe

I think Wolfe is one of the greatest living American authors. This collection is a good way to get to know his shorter work. It includes some of my favorite

short stories. “The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories,” for example, is a powerful story about a young boy who is neglected by his mother and finds solace in the pulpiest of pulp fiction. “Seven American Nights” is an amazing novella about a young Muslim man visiting a decadent America (this was written in the 1970s!). There are scary stories, wistful stories, and stories that are very hard to understand. They’re all worth your time and attention.

*Plato’s Ghost*, Jeremy Gray

Can there be such a thing as “modernist mathematics?” This book argues that the changes mathematics went through in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are similar to those that led to modernism in art. Gray does a great job of putting together mathematics, philosophy, and art, without making too many mathematical demands on the reader.

*Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies*, David Bentley Hart

This is, of course, a kind of response to Dawkins, Dennett, and Hitchens. But what a response! Hart’s prose always gets me going: long sentences that assume the reader can actually read, charged both with a deep intellectual awareness and a sharp sense of irony. Quite simply, he is fun to read while also being deeply serious.

## **Anna H. Graves** Library Assistant

*Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, Alison Bechdel

I’m recommending three graphic novels — they’re much more than “just comic books. *Fun Home* is an engaging, poignant, and very literary autobiography by the author of *Dykes to Watch Out For*.

*Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, Art Spiegelman

A story of the Holocaust told in two parts by a masterful artist, this work addresses complex issues of history and memory.

*Persepolis*, Marjane Satrapi

An autobiographical tale of growing up in Iran during the revolutionary era of the late 1970s that was also adapted into an excellent animated feature film by the author.

## **Paul G. Greenwood** Professor of Biology and Dr. Charles C. and Pamela W. Leighton Research Fellow

*The Day After Tomorrow*, Allan Folsom

An intriguing thriller... a mix of Harlan Coben and Dan Brown.

Folsom's first, and best, book.

*Wicked*, Gregory Maguire

We listened to this driving to Chicago and back a couple of summers ago. Interesting, fun, and heartbreaking. See the musical, too; wicked good fun... and not so heartbreaking...

**Tracey R. Greenwood**  
Teaching Assistant, Biology

*The Lady and The Panda*, Vicki Croke

*The Lady and The Panda* tells a story about a NY socialite that takes over a mission that her husband had started before his death. It is a vivid contrast of views on conservation of endangered animals in the 1930s and now. She invests her own inheritance on her quest to bring back a live panda (Su-Lin) to the United States.

*The Lost City of Z*, David Gram

David Gram tells his story of adventures into the Amazon searching for an explorer (Fawcett) that had disappeared in 1925 searching for the Lost City of Z. It drags a little through the middle but a turn of events and the discoveries unveiled at the end are very interesting.

**Samara R. Gunter**  
Visiting Assistant Professor of Economics

*The Risk Pool*, Richard Russo

Russo is a former Colby professor and his books explore the changing relationships between parents and children as children grow up. This is my favorite of Russo's books.

*The Worst Hard Time*, Timothy Egan

Egan's descriptions of the dust storms during the Dust Bowl are very powerful and include details I didn't know, such as the static electricity the storms generated. The story of how agricultural prices and homesteading rights impacted the Dust Bowl is fascinating.

**Natalie B. Harris**  
Associate Professor of English

*The Beggar Maid*, Alice Munro

I've been reading various collections of linked stories and found myself rereading this early book by Alice Munro, one of the masters of the short story. Each story centers on a character named Rose (and many include her stepmother Flo), who grew up in a small Canadian town, eventually finding her way out

through marriage and other love relationships and a career as an actress and TV personality. All through her journey, she brings her past, which Munro textures beautifully, along. Munro draws Rose as a woman gifted with a ripe imagination and a penetrating intelligence, reminding me of Munro herself.

**Walter F. Hatch**  
Assistant Professor of Government

*The Road*, Cormac McCarthy

McCarthy, like Beckett in *Endgame*, writes about survival in a bleak, post-apocalyptic world. Those who remain have been turned into remorseless beasts preying on the resources and flesh of others, or into remorseful beasts who realize they must kill to avoid being killed. But unlike Beckett's existentially crippled characters, McCarthy's protagonist, a father, shows us how to escape the rat wheel: In the most hopeless circumstances, he simply loves his son. Completely.

**Paul R. Josephson**  
Professor of History

*The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan

*In Defense of Food*, Michael Pollan

Pollan's books provide important insight into the environmental, social and public health dangers of agribusiness and the large scale industrialization of food production.

**Janice Armo Kassman**  
Special Assistant to the President for External Affairs

*High Country*, Willard Wyman

The author, Willard Wyman, graduated from Colby in 1956 and served as Dean of Students at Colby from 1970 – 1975, followed by a fulfilling career as the Headmaster of the Thacher School in Ojai. He spent summers leading mule packing trips through the Sierras. This book chronicles the lives of a close knit group of individuals who are imbued with a love of the mountains and mule packing. The characters are endearing and easily draw you into the complexity of their lives and passion for the outdoors.

**Martin F. Kelly**  
Visual Resources Librarian

*This Is Water*, David Foster Wallace

Nonfiction. The late novelist, cultural critic and philosopher David Foster Wallace possessed a great intelligence, an unparalleled command of the English language, and an uncanny knack for portraying, incisively yet humorously, the

human condition during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This short work is a transcript of Wallace's 2005 Kenyan College commencement address. The text provides a heartfelt, uncondescending bit of context for the graduate from which to digest what has been achieved and to prepare for what is to come.

*The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan

Nonfiction. Pollan explores various means of food production (including industrial agriculture, organic farming, hunting and gathering) thoroughly and even-handedly. His conclusions, while iconoclastic, are presented free of sanctimony. "Every time you go into a grocery store you are voting with your dollars, and what goes into your cart has real repercussions on the future of the earth. But although we have choices, few of us are aware of exactly what they are. Michael Pollan's beautifully written book could change that. He tears down the walls that separate us from what we eat, and forces us to be more responsible eaters. Reading this book is a wonderful, life-changing experience." — Ruth Reichl, editor in chief of *Gourmet* magazine.

**Karen R. Farrar Ledger**  
Scheduling Manager

*Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, Malcolm Gladwell

*Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* examines the way our unconscious mind makes instantaneous decisions and impressions from seemingly small components of an experience. The book describes how we make these decisions, both good and bad, and why some people are better than others at decision making. It is also a tutorial on ways of improving interpreting skills to make better decisions.

*The Last Lecture*, Randy Pausch

The author is a great story teller and gives his readers many thoughts to ponder. I found the book very enlightening and inspirational. Many of us rush through our lives and never stop to smell the roses. We forget how we once were as children — what inspired us? What were the dreams that we once had in our hearts? The author reminds us that life is short and to live out our dreams and enjoy everything life has to offer.

**Sharon Lee**  
Administrative Secretary

*Edison's Eve: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life*,  
Gaby Wood

I enjoyed this book immensely. Hardly surprising, since it deals with magicians, robots, weird science, and strange histories. It traces man's fascination with machines, from describing the "mechanics" of the human body to building mechanical humans — automata — from the Age of Enlightenment

(the first mechanical flute-player was built in 1739 by Jacques de Vaucanson) to today (the second mechanical flute-player ever built resides in a laboratory at Waseda University, in Tokyo). Not a beach book; it's a thin, dense read well worth your time.

**Vivian Lemieux**  
Administrative Secretary

*Blood Never Lies*, Ted Aloisio

For anyone interested in their own health and wellness, this nutritional microscopist, Ted Aloisio who does live blood analysis (LBA) on individuals, shows how we can visually see our health status at a cellular level. It's truly fascinating unlike medical labs. Ted reads live blood right in front of you. Assessing hydration levels, mineral levels, and a host of other screenings, Ted can assess the problem and suggest a solution. It's that simple. This book is for anyone who breathes, eats and sleeps.

**Elizabeth D. Leonard**  
John J. and Cornelia V. Gibson Professor of History

*Slaves in the Family*, Edward Ball

A fascinating account by the modern descendant of a slave holding and trading family in South Carolina of his attempt to uncover his family's past, to recover the history of the lives of his family's slaves, and to locate the slaves' own descendants. It is a deeply compelling investigation into the interconnectedness of white and black Americans in one family system over four hundred years.

*The Sea Captain's Wife*, Martha Hodes

The true history of a poor white New England woman in the early to mid 1800s who struggles to elevate herself and her children out of poverty through mill work, marriage, relocation to the South, and re-relocation back to New England. All of her efforts are unsuccessful, and her husband's death seems destined to wreck her life entirely, but then she meets and falls completely in love with a black sea captain from the Cayman Islands...

*Blue Pajamas*, Stephen Cushman

Just great poetry!

**Carole T. Levine**  
Merchandising Clerk, The Colby Bookstore

*Oh, The Places You'll Go*, Dr. Seuss

This is a great book, it was read at Commencement at Wheaton College.

*The Last Lecture*, Randy Pausch

*Mayflower Hill, A History of Colby College*, Earl H. Smith  
From the sales of this book at the Bookstore, I recommend this book.

*The Widow Clicquot*, Tilar J. Mazzeo  
From the sales of this book at the Bookstore, I recommend this book.

**Jason M. Long**  
Assistant Professor of Economics

*Battle Cry of Freedom*, James McPherson  
My top history book recommendation. A fast-paced but still thorough account of the American Civil War, both the issues that lead to the war, and the events of the war itself. *Battle Cry* seems to have become the standard one-volume book on the Civil War. But don't hold that against it, because it reads like a novel; I actually had trouble putting it down. I'd say it's just about impossible to understand America without understanding this pivotal episode in the history of the states and of the nation.

*Liar's Poker*, Michael Lewis  
Curious about "finance", now that it seems to be destroying the world? This little book is a great place to start if you want a smart and witty insider's look at what it's like to work in the world of New York City investment banking. It's an introduction to both finance and Michael Lewis' writing. I'm not an expert on finance, but I can tell you that Lewis is a great writer.

*House of Morgan*, Ron Chernow  
If *Liar's Poker* is Freshman Finance, then *House of Morgan* is the grad school class. To steal a blurb from the book... this book is to *Liar's Poker* what *War and Peace* is to a Judith Krantz novel. I'd recommend this to anyone interested in finance, globalization, or the last 200 years of U.S. history.

*American Gods*, Neil Gaiman  
One of the coolest novels I've read in a long time. Great plot, interesting characters, and some surprisingly perceptive insights into contemporary American culture. But mostly it's a wicked, funny, dark, gripping story. What's it about? Gods, yes... and belief, sacrifice, immigration, the "meltin'-pot," bizarre roadside attractions, and, from time to time, the living dead.

**Harriett Matthews**  
Professor of Art

*A Romance on Three Legs*, Katie Hafner  
This is about Glenn Gould's search for the perfect piano which he found in a

Steinway grand CD318. His relationship with this piano and the nearly blind piano tuner who kept the piano tuned is fascinating and an accessible read for anyone interested in music.

**Susan M. McDougal**  
Associate Dean

*The Three Musketeers*, Alexandre Dumas

*The Age of Innocence*, Edith Wharton

**Margaret T. McFadden**  
Associate Professor of American Studies

*The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan After the Taliban*,  
Sarah Chayes

Chayes was an NPR reporter who went to Afghanistan in 2002, and stayed to run a non-profit group after her assignment ended. It's a beautifully reported and written account of the United States' involvement in Afghanistan, which also illuminates a great deal about the history and culture of this fascinating nation. After you read this book, the political, diplomatic and military news from Central Asia will make a great deal more sense, and you will have a much clearer understanding of what is really going on. I urge you to form the habit of reading non-fiction about public affairs, as an important part of your post-Colby life.

**Lorie M. McLeod**  
Library Office & Stacks Coordinator

*Eat, Pray, Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert

Fabulous book about a woman who, after her nasty divorce, decides to travel to Italy, Indonesia and India. The author spends a year abroad dividing time between the three countries equally. On her journey of soul searching and self discovery she meets many new friends along the way including a delightful medicine man in Bali. Her time in Italy is filled with self indulgence consuming great cuisine and humor. In India she spends much of her time trying to emulate the ways of yogis through long hours of meditation and prayer. Throughout the book the author keeps you reading with her humor and honest, emotional accounts.

*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini

I actually had the opportunity to listen to this in an audio set instead of the written word. I think that the reader made the story even more incredible. Her pronunciation and accent help lend a genuine air to the formidable prose. It is the story of two women in Afghanistan during the

years of occupation by the Soviets and the Taliban. This tale is about two separate women and how they grew up to become intertwined in each others lives. Through many harrowing trials and brutal acts of violence these two face each event with such bravery and stoicism the reader wonders how they survive. At first they despise each other, but in the end they eventually depend on each other with one making the ultimate sacrifice for the other.

*The Road*, Cormac McCarthy

You just have to talk with someone about this book as you read it. Now, consider yourself warned. It's thought-provoking, terrifyingly possible, heart-wrenching, and impossible to ignore when you put it down. You will ask yourself, "What would I do?" or "Could I survive this?" Cormac has you thinking about his book long after you've finished reading it.

*Change of Heart*, Jodi Picoult

I am a Picoult fan and this book didn't disappoint. Jodi has a way of taking a moral dilemma and finding many ways to construct an outcome. And the outcome is usually never what you expect.

**Julie T. Millard**

The Dr. Gerald and Myra Dorros Professor of Chemistry

*Skeletons at the Feast*, Chris Bohjalian

I went to college with Bohjalian and make it a point to read all his books. My previous favorites have been *Midwives* and *The Buffalo Soldier*. *Skeletons at the Feast*, his twelfth and most recent novel, was inspired by the actual diary of a friend's East Prussian grandmother in which she describes her family's grueling trek across Germany to flee the Russian army in 1945. Bohjalian's novel revolves between several different intersecting stories: that of the Emmerich family, who are forced to abandon their estate in East Prussia upon advance of the Russians, Uri Singer, a Jewish escapee from a train bound for Auschwitz, who poses as a German officer and sabotages the Nazis at every opportunity, and Cecile, an optimistic French prisoner in a work camp, whose boots save her life when the prisoners are forced to undertake a gruesome death march ahead of the Russians. Although there are moments of loss and despair, the novel leaves the reader with much to consider. I found myself telling my family about parts of the book and wishing to share the experience with others.

**Lisa M. Miller**

Teaching Associate in Chemistry

*50 Hikes in Coastal and Southern Maine*, John Gibson

A very useful reference for planning a day hike or walk, especially when you just want some quiet time in the woods. Some of these hikes are near

the ocean or directly follow the coastline. Other hikes take you deeper into mountainous regions. This is a family friendly guide that lets you know what to expect for distances and difficulty levels. As a bonus, the geographic range is a bit more than just the southern parts of Maine.

*The Mediator* (series), Meg Cabot

If you can't get to your afterlife who are you going to call? Most people recognize Meg Cabot for her Princess Dairies series. She has another interesting set of books she has written. Her sixteen year old main character, Suze, is not an ordinary teenager because she not only talks to the dead, she also helps them to finish unfinished business on earth. A great summer read for your tween, teen, or the kid in you.

*Undaunted Courage*, Stephen E. Ambrose

This book is overflowing with historical detail which Ambrose has woven primarily from documents of Meriwether Lewis. The events before, during and after the Lewis & Clark expedition are given in this unvarnished tale. It is very hard to comprehend the vision, organization, and energy required to have undertaken such a journey in the early 1800's. A book like this at least breathes vitality into the past, giving embodiment to the spirit, passion and courage of those who came before us.

The Stephanie Plum series, Janet Evanovich

Stephanie Plum is a bounty hunter in New Jersey with enough novel adventure to keep you grateful to be in bed with the covers pulled up tight around you. She sometimes enlists the aid of some rather unusual characters to "get her man," and the capture rarely goes according to plan but always requires doughnuts. She may even remind you a bit of Junie B. Jones or at least what she would be like all grown up and on her own. Stephanie has plenty of moxie for the teen-aged and up.

## **Mary Elizabeth Mills** Professor of Anthropology

*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, James Agee

A beautiful meditation on human beings and a moving portrait of American life (black and white sharecroppers in the rural 1930s US South) that resonates still. Great Walker Evans photos, too.

*A Fisherman of the Inland Sea*, Ursula K. LeGuin

A story of worlds far away in a distant galaxy, or is it? Fantasy fiction that makes you think.

*Pathologies of Power*, Paul Farmer

Think you've got a handle on the difficulties we face? Think again! Think

there's nothing to be done? Read this!

**Lydia Moland**  
Assistant Professor of Philosophy

*The Human Stain*, Philip Roth

Considered by some to be *a* if not *the* great American novel, this book gets at the fundamental tensions in American society in a dramatic, surprising and thought-provoking way.

**Jacques R. Moore**  
Director, Special Programs

*The Known World*, Edward P. Jones

*The Known World* is a Pulitzer prize winning novel set in pre-Civil War Virginia, although the time shifts the author employs work well to round out the story. It centers around two families and the slaves they own. It looks at slavery from a perspective that I had never before considered. The fascinating “hook” for me is that it is a story about black people who owned slaves — something that did in fact occur, albeit rarely. Beautifully written, not at all preachy, and heart wrenching at times, this book will stay with you long after you finish reading it. One of the best I’ve read in many years.

*The Exodus*, Leon Uris

This work of historical fiction tells the story of the founding of the State of Israel. I read this book 30 years ago and reread it last year. It definitely stood the test of time.

**Jan Munroe**  
Psychological Counselor

*10 Lessons to Transform Your Marriage*, John M. Gottman & Julie Schwartz Gottman

You might not be married now, but most of us are headed toward some kind of committed relationship at some point in our lives — and we’re doing it with almost no formal education on the subject. The Gottmans’ book provides well-researched education which is fun to read and easy to understand. In fact, why wait for marriage — get your education now and you can go into your next relationship able to see what needs to happen for a happy and satisfying future together. The Gottmans have written other books as well which are similarly good. Check them out.

*How to Hike the AT: The Nitty-Gritty of a Long Distance Trek*,  
Michelle Ray

Hot off the press, a very carefully assembled set of guidelines on preparing for a long distance AT hike, written by a long distance AT hiker — equipment, financial prep, dealing with house and home, managing affairs from on the trail, food, lodging, safety, clothing — there are chapters on each of these, with good checklists and questions to review to help figure out what needs to be done when. Even if you're just dreaming of doing this someday, it's a good read and very sound advice.

**Elisa M. Narin van Court**  
Associate Professor of English

*Prodigal Summer*, Barbara Kingsolver

This novel acts like it will break your heart, but heals it in the most extraordinary way. Kingsolver gives us wondrously and seemingly disparate story lines that connect and then reconnect in patterns and plots that emphasize the joys (and vulnerabilities) of communities: human, animal, and the natural world, in a marvelous dance of love and lust, desire and delight — the novel resonates with all that makes life both magical and utterly, inescapably, real. Read it and laugh and wonder and then read it again!

**Barbara Kuczun Nelson**  
Associate Professor of Spanish

*Stones From the River*, Ursula Hegi

*Stones from the River* is a complex novel of life in Germany set in Burgdorf, a small fictional German town, between 1915 and 1951. The protagonist is Trudi Montag, a Zwerg — the German word for dwarf woman. As a dwarf she is set apart, the outsider whose physical “otherness” has a corollary in her refusal to be a part of Burgdorf’s silent complicity during and after World War II. Through Trudi’s eyes, we witness the growing impact of Nazism on the ordinary townsfolk as they are thrust on to a larger moral stage and forced to make choices that will forever mark their lives. *Stones from the River* is a story of secrets, parceled out masterfully by Trudi and Ursula Hegi as they reveal the truth about living through unspeakable times.

*Guernica*, Dave Boling

This is a compelling first novel that has been described as a love story, a war novel and an historical novel about the horrific bombing of Guernica (Basque country) on the eve of World War II.

*The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, Carson McCullers

In this first novel McCullers tells the story of Mick Kelly, a 12-year-old girl growing up during the Great Depression. Mick is a gifted pianist who longs to escape her dreary Georgia town and find a career in music. In her

alienation from her surroundings, she finds comfort in befriending a deaf-mute, John Singer, who lives in her family's boarding house. The ironically named Singer is devastated when his only real friend — another deaf-mute — goes mad and is institutionalized. As Mick and other lonely townspeople tell Singer their troubles, they find in him a refuge from the pain of their isolation, never understanding that Singer himself is slowly giving in to despair. McCullers writes about these lost and melancholy people with deep compassion and a keen awareness of racial and class tensions, but also with appreciation for the universal human need to seek out beauty and decency wherever they can be found.

**Robert E. Nelson**  
Professor of Geology

*Carrying Water as a Way of Life*, Linda Tatelbaum

A rich and moving memoir of a recently retired member of the Department of English, tracing the roots of a “back to the Earth” environmental activist as she and her partner carve a “green” homestead from the Maine wilderness long before it was politically fashionable.

*The Planets*, Jennifer Finney Boylan

*The Constellations*, Jennifer Finney Boylan

*Getting In*, Jennifer Finney Boylan

*She's Not There*, Jennifer Finney Boylan

*I'm Looking Through You*, Jennifer Finney Boylan

Anything Jenny Boylan has written is a wonderfully rich experience to savor. Early novels — *The Planets*, *The Constellations*, *Getting In* — are filled with lovable but quirky characters whose intertwined lives remind us of both the humor and the fragility of the human condition. Her more recent nonfiction offerings share a different sort of tenderness, one both more robust and more fragile, that always leaves you grateful for what you've been given in the pages read, while wanting to know more and trying to be patient as you wait for what may be to come. I'm anxiously awaiting her next book myself, and always buy additional copies as special gifts.

*In Another Country*, Susan Kenney

The first novel I read that was written by one of my colleagues, and one of the most moving books I've ever picked up. Parts struck very close to home, reminding me that even though we traversed disparate academic fields, the pathos of the human condition transcends the superficialities of academic garb. Though it's been out for years, I would hope that it should still be available.

*Historical Perspectives on Climate Change*, James Rodger Fleming

For those who think concern over climate change is new, think again! This

volume pulls together a thorough historical documentation of how concern over climate change has evolved over the centuries. A wonderful background volume to provide insight into the history of today's ongoing international debates, debates often carried on by people with little true understanding of the difference between climate and weather or of natural long-term climate change.

**S. Carleen Nelson**  
Administrative Secretary

*Little Pink House*, Jeff Benedict

This book about government allowing eminent domain to take property from low-income citizens and give it to big business interests (in this case, Pfizer in New London, CT) is a "must read." The story of one woman's fight to retain her property, "a little pink house." It is an absorbing, interesting story.

**Patricia Newmen**  
Director of Counseling Services

*When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times*, Pema Chodron

I enthusiastically recommend any book by Pema Chodron. She is an American woman who became a Tibetan Buddhist nun. Her gift is being able to present Buddhist concepts in ways that have immediate relevance to our lives. Her books are collections of short essays which were originally talks (or teachings). I have found them to be a source of comfort, insight and inspiration.

*The Book Thief*, Markus Zusak

This book has won many awards, including ones for Children's Literature, but it is very much a book for adults as well. The setting is Germany beginning in 1939, and the story is told in an unusual and compelling way, and the book has some memorable characters in it.

**Kerill N. O'Neill**  
Julian D. Taylor Associate Professor of Classics

*Augustus Carp, Esq.*, Henry Howarth Bashford

No book has ever made me laugh more. In an age where so many moral authorities turn out to be hypocrites, Augustus Carp's receding brow and sloping shoulders tower vaingloriously over all others.

*Miss Marjoribanks*, Margaret Oliphant

Margaret Oliphant's wit lies somewhere between that of Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope. We can all delight in the social, political, and romantic

triumphs of Miss Marjoribanks, who alone appreciates her wisdom, fortitude, and strength of character.

*The Enchantress of Florence*, Salman Rushdie

This novel plays beautifully with fiction, metafiction, and imagined worlds. The story is fascinating but again and again you will find yourself pausing to savor a perfect line, or to contemplate a profound insight.

### **Patricia A. Onion**

Professor of English, Emerita

*Oedipus at Colonus*, Sophocles

I have to recommend this play, which I have been obsessed with for weeks. Sophocles wrote it at 89, and self-blinded Oedipus is at the end of his life, working his way through rage: "If someone tried to kill you here and now/ You righteous gentleman, what would you do,/ Inquire first if the stranger was your father?" He ends as the messenger describes: "And yet one word/Frees us of all the weight and pain of life: / That word is love." (trans. Robert Fitzgerald)

*All Passion Spent*, Vita Sackville-West

Just when I'd sworn off novels I picked up this extraordinary, witty, interior profile of an elderly woman out of synch with her times, who takes hold of her life in her final years; accurately considered to be a companion novel to Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. A terrific read.

### **Laurie E. Osborne**

NEH / Class of 1940 Distinguished Professor of Humanities, English

*Agent of Change*, Sharon Lee and Steve Miller

For Science Fiction and Fantasy aficionados, Miller and Lee are a real treat. And a Colby connection as well!

*Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*, Atul Gawande

Though most of these essays have appeared elsewhere, they work well together and offer insights into achieving excellence that are relevant to all fields, not just medicine!

*Ballistics: Poems*, Billy Collins

How can I not recommend the new collection by Billy Collins? See particularly "The Effort" (60-61), "Baby Listening" (85-86), and, for succinct pain, "Divorce" (98). Really you should read *any* poetry collection by Billy Collins.

*Cotillion*, Georgette Heyer

For Austen lovers, Heyer can rapidly become an addiction. Most of her

work has been recently reprinted. Enjoy.

**Ellen C. Paul**  
Security Officer

*A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Child Soldier*, Ishmael Beah  
A well written first-hand story of how children learn to kill. This author's insight is something to behold.

*A Thousand Splendid Suns*, Khaled Hosseini  
This is a heart-wrenching story of women in Afghanistan and is very well written

*My Tainted Blood*, Hubert Kueter  
Written with humor and determination, this is what it was like for one person to grow up with mixed Jewish ancestry in Nazi Germany.

**Tamae K. Prindle**  
Oak Professor of East Asian Language and Literature  
[Japanese]

*Never Call Retreat*, Bruce Catton  
This gives a realistic account of the American Civil War, something different from the simple versions we learn in K-12 history classes. I recommend the Recorded Books edition, which you can listen as you drive to and from work.

*Napoleon 1812*, Nigel Nicolson  
This book shows how an individual's ambition/folly costs the lives of numerous others. Napoleon's invasion of Russia is one of the critical moments in world history.

*The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Haruki Murakami  
This novel explores the basic meaning of human existence. Murakami is one of the leading novelists in Japan.

**Marilyn R. Pukkila**  
Head of Instructional Services, Colby Libraries

*When Things Fall Apart*, Pema Chödrön  
Because they do, and they will! Chödrön is an excellent writer, gentle and precise, so any of her works will do, but this one has the catchiest title. How to be gentle with yourself, and with each other, and live through the difficult times while still knowing joy.

*Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien

This was a Tolkien year for me (meaning that I taught the Tolkien Jan Plan this year), and it reminded me once again of the richness of this story. The importance of true friendship, doing what is needed in the face of terrible resistance and lousy odds of success, remembering all the forces at work for good in the world, and belief that simple beauty and joy will out in the end are all good things to consider in these troubled times. If you've only seen the movies and never read the book, give yourself that gift and read it as soon as you can — I don't think you'll be sorry!

*Reaper Man*, Terry Pratchett

When The Auditors decide that Death has been behaving, well, too humanly, they retire Him — and an excess of life force builds up until a just-died Wizard at the Unseen University unexpectedly returns as a zombie, a dwarf-devouring compost pile attacks the University faculty, and a parasitic shopping mall (OK, nothing new about that!) tries to take over the city of Ankh-Morpork. Get the picture? Laughter is often the best medicine, and Pratchett is a genius at provoking it, even as he can move readers to tears with his succinct and empathetic statements about love, loss, and, well, being human. This is one of a delightful series (and my personal favorite), so if you like it, there's plenty more laughter where that came from!

### **Anindyo Roy**

Associate Professor of English

*Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chimamanda Adichie

A powerful account of the predicaments and trails of the postcolonial West Africa, the novel resonates in powerful ways for anyone interested in contemporary African politics, war, nationalism, and neo-colonialism.

*Sea of Poppies*, Amitav Ghosh

A riveting historical novel set in 19th century British India, interweaving stories of Indian migrants to Mauritius, British expansion and the opium trade.

### **Bruce F. Rueger**

Visiting Assistant Professor of Geology, 2003– ; Senior Teaching Associate

*A Short History of Nearly Everything*, Bill Bryson

It is a Bill Bryson book, need I say more. But I will. This book provides what I think is a very good history of the evolution of science. It is a great read, a good reference and provides a very good foundation in the geological sciences.

*The Mountains of Saint Francis: Discovering the Geologic Events That Shaped Our Earth*, Walter Alvarez

I really enjoyed this book. It provided a very good, easy to read discussion of the geologic development of the Italian Peninsula as well as the related developments of scientific inquiry. It concisely and accurately presented the basics of plate tectonics, the fundamental theory of geology in an easy to read manner.

*Wind, Sand and Stars*, Antoine de Saint-Exupery

By the author of *The Little Prince*, I would call this a great read. Antoine de Saint-Exupery was a pilot prior to WWII and flew for Aeropostale (not the clothing company, but the mail delivery service) flying first from southern France to cities and towns in northern Africa and in South America in Argentina along the eastern Andes. The book provides insight to the his thoughts and the perils and exploits associated with flying the mail. During WWII he flew for the French Air Force and was shot down and lost over the Mediterranean.

**Elizabeth H. Sagaser**  
Associate Professor of English

*Alexander Hamilton*, Ron Chernow

A vivid history of the revolutionary years and early decades of the United States, Chernow's book is above all a riveting biography. Through charisma and intellectual brilliance, a poor orphan from the Carribean becomes a vital player in the American Revolution and the structuring of a new nation.

**Raffael M. Scheck**  
Professor of History

*Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization*, Nicholson Baker

A controversial, quietly passionate book about the descent into mass murder in the first half of the twentieth century. Baker lines up little pieces of factual information that throw a critical light on the embrace of mass death for civilians in war from the 1890s to 1941. The book should be read critically, but it is an inspiring and fascinating text.

*My Tainted Blood*, Hubert C. Kueter

A fascinating memoir of a former Colby professor of German. Hubert grew up in Nazi Germany as a son of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father. With wit and elegance, he describes all of his schemes to outwit the Nazis and to survive in the midst of a collapsing Nazi Empire and a beginning Cold War. Hubert Kueter has a remarkable talent for story-telling.

*The Living Unknown Soldier*, Jean-Yves Le Naour

One night in early 1918, during the last winter of World War I, a soldier

in French uniform is found wandering on the platform of a train station in Lyon. He has lost his memory, perhaps in response to a traumatic experience in the trenches. He appears to have left a train carrying wounded and mentally disabled soldiers who were prisoners of war in Germany (exchanges of such prisoners through neutral Switzerland happened throughout the war). The search for this man's identity lasts several decades and garners national attention. (Sadly, nobody in France ever bothered to ask the German authorities, who had detailed records on the soldiers on this train.) Parents appear in the insane asylum where the soldier is kept and claim him as their missing son. Women appear and "recognize" their husbands lost at the front. Lawsuits start. To whom does this man belong? Who is entitled to his military disablement pension? A story about trauma and grief unfolds, revealing invisible wounds left by war that often do not heal years, even decades, after the guns have fallen silent.

**Mark R. Serdjenian**  
Adjunct Associate Professor of Athletics

*A Separate Peace*, John Knowles  
Moving, powerful and timeless novel of adolescence.

*Incident at Twenty-Mile*, Trevanian  
From the author of *Shibumi* and *The Eiger Sanction* comes a satisfying thriller set in the American West. Then you may wish to read *Shibumi* as well.

*The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, Franz Werfel  
A powerful, emotional novel set in the Turkey of 1915.

**Barbara C. Shutt**  
Director, The Colby Bookstore

*Ender's Game*, Orson Scott Card  
I read *Ender's Game* while working at a bookstore in Western Massachusetts years ago. Because I'd read some science fiction as a kid, and had brothers who'd read it too, my co-workers dubbed me the resident expert. They sent every customer question my way, and out of self-preservation I started reading science fiction again. I stayed up all night finishing *Ender's Game* and actually started it again the next evening after work. Everyone at work read it that summer, and I didn't get a single negative response. *Ender's Game* is a book about war that is a book about peace, and it's got an incredibly appealing main character in Ender. Don't waste time telling yourself that you don't read science fiction, just pick up a copy.

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Mark Haddon  
The narrator of this novel is Christopher, a 15-year-old autistic savant living in Great Britain. Incapable of processing emotion, and fascinated by Sherlock Holmes, Christopher resolves to uncover the truth behind the suspicious death of a neighbor's dog - a death for which he is initially blamed. Seen through the lens of Christopher's existence, you understand only what he does, at least initially. The book is disorienting and refreshing and funny and sad.

**Debra A. Spark**  
Professor of English

*So Long, See You Tomorrow*, William Maxwell  
A short book that stems from Maxwell's memory of slighting a boy in a high school hallway and wincing at that memory, many decades later. This is a memoir, though not a conventional one, whose ostensible topic is a murder in a small town but whose true topic is loss and the way in which memory works in the face of grief. It is one of the most beautiful and compassionate books I've ever read, and each time I return to it, I find something new to admire.

**Rurik L. Spence**  
Director, Personal Computer Support Services

*In Defense of Food*, Michael Pollan  
It might seem unnecessary to defend food. After all, we all need it, right? But go to the grocery store or "supermarket" and you might find and get less food than you expect. Pollan takes you through a journey of food and makes a recommendation on what we should be eating summarized as "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

**Christopher J. Soto**  
Instructor in Psychology

*City of Thieves*, David Benioff  
A fantastic adventure story that successfully mixes comedy, tragedy, and plenty of excitement.

*The Road*, Cormac McCarthy  
I love dystopian fiction, and this is the best that I've come across in some time.

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Mark Haddon  
A unique murder mystery, very well told.

**Judy L. Stone**  
Associate Professor of Biology

*Charles Darwin: Voyaging*, Janet Browne

Did you ever have a “work” book that usurped the place of your “fun” book? That’s what this book did for me. You can admire the creative genius of one of the world’s great thinkers while reveling in the fact that he was not particularly promising at your age. On the other hand, Darwin continually strived to observe with an open mind and to synthesize observations from various sources, something that your liberal arts education should have prepared you to do well.

**Christina M. Steeves**  
Staff Athletic Trainer

*Pillars of the Earth*, Ken Follett

Historical fiction from the 12th century, it’s amazing to think how people lived day to day, how they built castles/cathedrals with their hands and the ingenuity required, and how they fed themselves throughout the year. The themes of the basic nature of good people vs. evil, and the corruption that can come with power are just as prevalent today.

**Dory Streett**  
Associate Director, Admissions and Financial Aid

*Disgrace*, J. M. Coetzee

A thought-provoking page-turner set in contemporary South Africa that explores race, gender and intellectual issues. Coetzee is a Nobel Prize Winner in literature, and this is one of the reasons why.

*Waiting*, Ha Jin

A beautifully written tale set in China spanning the course of several decades in the 20th century. An allegory that’s part social history, part romance. See if you can figure out the symbolism of the insects!

**Barbara Sweney**  
Assistant Director, Admissions and Financial Aid

*Port City Shakedown, Pretty Dead, Home Body, Bloodline, Deadline, Borderline, Lifeline, Cover Story*, Gerry Boyle

Gerry’s detective novels are enjoyable, well-written, well-plotted, and full of authentic Maine details. It’s icing on the cake that he’s one of our own!

**Mark B. Tappan**  
Professor of Education

*Work Hard. Be Nice.*, Jay Matthews

An account of the early days of KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) Schools, an innovative and successful effort to teach low-income, at-risk middle-schools. The book features Colby's own Caleb Dolan '96, principal of Gaston College Preparatory Academy in Gaston, NC.

*Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*, Paul Tough

An account of the work of Geoffrey Canada and the Harlem Children's Zone, a program designed to transform the lives of children and families living in poverty by giving them access to the same opportunities and resources afforded to middle-class and affluent children and families.

**Larissa J. Taylor**  
Professor of History

*The Girl with No Shadow*, Joanne Harris

Since my childhood I have lived in and through books, experiencing other places and times. I've been lucky to explore those different places as a result of career choices, but my love of books — all sorts — continues. As a historian, I often choose not to read history books for leisure, but rather novels. Harris, the author of the book that was turned into the movie *Chocolat*, now has a new book. I love epic struggles of good vs. evil and this delivers. It may not be profound, but it is no beach book. To all my students and graduates, I say "Read!" and then read some more. Although many predict the end of book reading as such, there is nothing more glorious than holding, reading and feeling a good book.

**Eric B. Thomas**  
Clarinet and Saxophone; Director of Band Activities

*Riddled with Life: Friendly Worms, Ladybug Sex, and the Parasites That Make Us Who We Are*, Marlene Zuk

Ever wonder why you like that certain someone you find so attractive? Well it could be that a parasite is telling you what to do. This is a fascinating read and it may change the way you eat, date and... Well read it for yourself!

*American Aurora: A Democratic-Republican Returns; The Suppressed History of Our Nation's Beginnings*, Richard Rosenfeld  
Do you believe that politics and the press are out of control and morally irresponsible? Then you need to read this book. Find out from reputable sources about our first President, the illiterate murderer George Washington. Were

you aware of which founding father's wives were having affairs? How about when they had to ship the depressed and totally ineffective John Adams off to the Netherlands to keep him out of negotiations with France? Just a book that can't be put down.

**Jennifer J. Thorn**  
Assistant Professor of English

*Go, Tell Michelle: African American Women Write to the First Lady*,  
Barbara Seals and Peggy Brooks-Bertram

The editors, from the Uncrowned Queens African American community building group, have collected 100 letters from American women of African and Caribbean descent. Moving and fascinating, as typified perhaps by the words of one contributor, a professional violist: "HOLD YOUR HEAD UP HIGH, WE ARE GOING WITH YOU."

*Cradle of Liberty: Race, the Child, and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W.E.B. DuBois*, Caroline Field Levander  
Scholarly, imaginative, illuminating scrutiny of the place of the concept of the child in the linked articulation of ideologies of race and national identity from the slave-holding Revolutionary era through the Civil War. Even as I might quarrel with some of her conclusions about sentimentalism, I admire its conceptual rigor and its reach beyond national borders into Mexico, Cuba, and Germany.

**Doug Thornsjo**  
Trade Book Coordinator, The Colby Bookstore

*The Complete Little Orphan Annie*, Harold Gray  
IDW's Library of American Comics is reprinting, in archival quality and often for the first time, the great classics of American Newspaper Comic Strips from *Dick Tracy* to *Terry and The Pirates*. My favorite, though, is Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie*, a sprawling Depression-era fable about a kid with nothing but spunk, grit, determination and a great dog. Volume one in the series contains over 1,000 daily strips (most shot from the original syndicate proofs), nine complete stories. These beautiful volumes belong on the shelves of anyone who takes "graphic novels" (I still call 'em comics) seriously.

*A Fine and Private Place*, Peter S. Beagle  
A novel about a man who lives in a graveyard, and the ghosts who urge him back to life, while facing a journey of their own. It asks all the big questions and answers them in the sweetest possible way. A genuine classic, not to be missed.

*The Museum of Lost Wonder*, Jeff Hoke

Alchemy is not dead! Jeff Hoke has built a museum of alchemical theory and thought and erected it between the covers of this fascinating illuminated book. Enter and walk through exhibits designed to open your mind, then build the three-dimensional pieces included. This is an old-fashioned museum, and some of the exhibits are not pretty, but all are designed to elicit a response. If books are places that we inhabit, here is one designed to take that principle to its ultimate level.

*Amphigory*, Edward Gorey

Submit to the subversive influence of the maestro of gloom.

*The Marvelous Land of Oz*, L. Frank Baum

Followers of Gregory Maguire would be better served, IMHO, by going back to the fourteen Oz novels written by The Man Himself. *The Marvelous Land of Oz* is the first of the sequels, and it really opens up the Land of Oz in unexpected ways (including a hero who changes his sex at the end). Be sure you pick up one of the facsimile editions with the original illustrations by the great John R. Neill.

... and always, always: Uncle Billy Faulkner, Joyce Cary, Robertson Davies, Alasdair Gray, Stan Lee, Raymond Chandler, and *The Twenty-One Balloons*. Thank you, and good night.

### **James C. Thurston**

Adjunct Associate Professor of Theater and Dance

*The Best American Short Stories*, Heidi Pitlor (Series Editor)

First published in 1915, this ongoing series represents a refreshing annual collection of short stories by established and emerging American writers. These short stories express an essence of life through a delightful range of writing styles and perspectives.

### **John P. Turner**

Assistant Professor of History

*The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, Roy Mottahedeh

If one wants to understand contemporary Iran and the 1979 revolution, this is the place to begin. Beautifully written.

*My Uncle Napoleon*, Iraj Pezeshkzad

A very, very funny Iranian novel.

*Travels with Charley: In Search of America*, John Steinbeck

*The Great Arab Conquest*, Hugh Kennedy

*When Baghdad Ruled the World*, Hugh Kennedy

Reading these two delightfully written books will give you a window onto the medieval world, the Middle East and the deep historical context underneath the current practice of Islam.

**Denise R. Walden**

Associate Director, Admissions & Multicultural Enrollment

*The Holy Bible*

Through *all* of life's challenges, joys and disappointments, this is the one book that provides direction, comfort and hope — especially when at the lowest ebb in life. By reading the Bible often, one continually finds new insights at various stages of life. The best guidebook ever!

# Colby Class of 2009 Recommendations

**Ayaz K. Achakzai**

*The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition and Memory in the North West Frontier*, Mukulika Banerjee

**Michael C. Ambrogi**

*Franny and Zooey*, J. D. Salinger

**Devon E. Anderson**

*A River Runs Through It*, Norman MacLean

**Cynthia C. Anderson-Bauer**

*Dubliners*, James Joyce

**Daniela A. Andreevska**

*War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy

**Elyse M. Apantaku**

*Good Omens*, Terry Pratchett

**Laura E. Anning**

*The Secret History of the American Empire*, John Perkins

**Rachel L. Baird**

*A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, Betty Smith

**Emma E. Balazs**

*Into the Forest*, Jean Hegland

**Michael P. Barrett, Jr.**

*Seven Soldiers*, Grant Morrison

**Brooke D. Barron**

*East of Eden*, John Steinbeck

**Erin M. Beasley**

*The Wheel of Time*, Robert Jordan

**James O. Beltran**

*Twilight in the Desert*, Matthew Simmons

**Zoe E. Benezet-Parsons**

*The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

**Emily G. Berghoff**

*The Magic School Bus*, Joanna Cole

**Laura B. Bisbee**

*The Scarlet Pimpernel*, Baroness Orczy

**Patrick M. Boland**

*All the President's Men*, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward

**Rachel M. Bonenfant**

*The Giver*, Lois Lowry

**Esther E. Boyd**

*Dubliners*, James Joyce

**Matthew T. Briggs**

*How To, When To, Why To*, Torbjorn Karlsen and Ruff Patterson

**Kelly M. Brooks**

*The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini

**Stephen C. Brooks**

*Into the Wild*, John Krakauer

**Lacey A. Brown**

*Gone With the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell  
the *Harry Potter* series, J.K. Rowling

**Sara A. Burbine**

*Three Cups of Tea*, Greg Mortenson

**Katherine M. Butler**

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire

**Brittany E. Canniff**

*The Power of One*, Bryce Courtenay

**Caitlin G. Casey**

*The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan

**Lana N. Ciociolo-Hinkell**

*The Red Tent*, Anita Diamant

**Alexandra C. Clegg**

*The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy

**Julia P. Coffin**

*Drop City*, T.C. Boyle

**Catherine S. Coffman**

*Senor Vivo and the Coca Lord*, Louis de Bernieres

**Elana Cogliano**

*Jesus' Son*, Denis Johnson

**Kimberly B. Cohen**

*In the Shadow of Man*, Jane Goodall

**Max F. Cohen**

*The Taste of Dreams: An Obsession with Russia and Caviar*, Vanora Bennett

**Pamela Colon**

*Savage Inequalities*, Jonathan Kozol  
*The Alchemist*, Paulo Coelho

**Amanda E. Comeau**

*The Shack*, Paul Young

**Soren A. Craig-Muller**

*Cryptonomicon*, Neal Stephenson

**Colin R. Cummings**

*Ulysses*, James Joyce

**Franklin L. Davison**

*Finding Miracles*, Julia Alvarez

**Sarah K. DeLiefde**

*When States Kill*, Cecilia Menjivar and Nestor Rodriguez, editors

**Elizabeth A. Doran**

*Forever*, Judy Blume

**Sally E. Drescher**

*1984*, George Orwell

*The Odyssey*, Homer

**Chelsea V. Eakin**

*The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin

**Sommer H. Engels**

*Water for Elephants*, Sara Gruen

**Allyson D. Felser**

*Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov

**Cary B. Finnegan**

*Amelia Bedelia*, Peggy Parish

**Joanna H. Fisher**

*Still Life with Woodpecker*, Tom Robbins

**Devan K. FitzPatrick**

*A Prayer for Owen Meany*, John Irving

**Emily E. Foraker**

*Catch 22*, Joseph Heller

**Eric M. Foster-Moore**

*Principles of Macroeconomics*, N. Gregory Mankiw

**Alexandra P. Freyer**

*Eat, Pray, Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert

**Benjamin B. Green**

*Mr. Popper's Penguins*, Richard Atwater

**Margaret R. Gribbell**

*The Quiet American*, Graham Greene

**Sara E. Gutt**

*Zorro*, Isabelle Allende

**Tucker L. Hancock**

*A Time of Gifts*, Patrick Liegh Fermor

**Emily L. Hansen**

*Nineteen Minutes*, Jodi Picoult

**Katharine J. Harmon**

*Atlas Shrugged*, Ayn Rand

**Benjamin T. Hauptman**

*The Rainmaker*, John Grisham

**Daniel G. Heinrich**

*Seabiscuit*, Laura Hillenbrand

**Elizabeth T. Hester**

*You Shall Know Our Velocity*, Dave Eggers

**Lawson A. Hill**

*Moloka'i*, Alan Brennert

**Kamenya M. Hinga**

*The Fountainhead*, Ayn Rand

**Ashlee N. Holm**

*American Gods*, Neil Gaiman

**Samuel C. Hough**

*Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer

**Caroline G. Hunt**

*Crossing to Safety*, Wallace Stegner

**Sara S. Hutchins**

*Against Which*, Ross Gay

**Joshua B. Jamner**

*Confessions of an Economic Hitman*, John Perkins

**Fern A. Jeremiah**

*Guns, Germs and Steel*, Jared Diamond

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*Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal*,  
Christopher Moore

**Brianna N. Kondrat**

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*Survival in Auschwitz*, Primo Levi

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*House of Leaves*, Mark Z. Danielewski

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*March*, Geraldine Brooks

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*The Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver

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*Rethinking Human Rights: Challenges for Theory and Action*, Smitu Kothari and Harsh Sethi

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*The Power of One*, Bryce Courtenay

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*Soldier of the Great War*, Mark Helprin

**Kelly M. McKone**

*Old Turtle*, Douglas Wood

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*Lonely Planet – Africa on a Shoestring*

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*Breakfast of Champions*, Kurt Vonnegut

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*Lone Survivor*, Marcus Luttrell and Patrick Robinson

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*The Giving Tree*, Shel Silverstein

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*The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan

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*The Sparrow*, Mary Doria Russell

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*Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley

**Jacob J. Schwarz**

*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde

**Henry W. Sears**

*A Farewell to Arms*, Earnest Hemingway

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