

TOPICS OFFERED FOR FALL 2014

*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 September 1st and end December 31st.
Holiday periods are adapted to by individual class voting.*

1. (ASA) ASIA'S CAULDRON: THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

When Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 disappeared on March 8th, most Americans were unaware of the complicated relationships among the countries surrounding the South China Sea, including China, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Fortunately, noted author Robert Kaplan has just published a book about the area. Kaplan, who has been named one of the world's Top 100 Thinkers by *Foreign Policy* magazine, describes the various nations, the conflicts brewing in the region, and their implications for global peace and security. He describes how the region's geography fosters the growth of navies yet impedes aggression and draws parallels between China's increasingly aggressive behavior and the United States' imperialism in the late 19th century. S/DG members can prepare presentations on any of the countries involved, or describe historical relationships.

Common Reading: *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific*, by Robert D. Kaplan (March 2014)

1st & 3rd Wednesday, p.m. – Room 5

Coordinators: Tom Vincent 534-2256 & Joann Bally 372-8213

2. (AWW) AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II

The end of the Second World War in Europe is one of the twentieth century's most iconic moments remembered fondly as a time when cheering crowds celebrated in the streets. These images of victory contrast with the anarchy and civil war that followed across the European continent. With entire cities razed and more than thirty million people killed, the social institutions - such as the police, the media, transport, local and national government - were either entirely absent or hopelessly compromised. Crime rates were soaring, economies collapsing, and the European population was hovering on the brink of starvation. The Second World War might have officially ended in May 1945, but in reality it rumbled on for another ten years. Keith Lowe's book, *Savage Continent*, serves as a background describing a continent racked by violence, where vengeance, old tribal rivalries, and harsh realities face large sections of the population.

Possible presentations could be the following:

- Obligations of the victors
- Humanitarian efforts
- Situation of a city or country pre- and post-war
- Individuals and statesmen involved in post-war clean up
- U.S., Britain, and Russia's recovery as the "allies" vs. the other countries
- Economic results and recovery industries/jobs

Common Reading: *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II*
by Keith Lowe (July 2012)

1st & 3rd Tuesday, p.m. – Room 6

Coordinators: Dick Johnson 791-9981 & Leslie Back 540-3598

3. (CON) AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION: HOW AND WHY WE SHOULD CHANGE

The United States Constitution is perhaps the greatest political document in history, yet our nation is not the same as it was when the Constitution was ratified in 1781. Our Founders could not have imagined a nation of more than 300 million people, nor could they anticipate technological advancements such as cell phones and semi-automatic weapons when they constructed the Bill of Rights.

The process of amending the Constitution is difficult, and it has only been successful 27 times. But if you had the chance, what changes would you make? This S/DG will provide you an opportunity to explore the possibilities.

In our common reading, retired Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, John Paul Stevens, proposes six such changes, including gerrymandering, campaign finance, the death penalty, and gun control. Our discussions of the common reading will discuss the pros and cons of Stevens' proposals. Presentations can address other possible changes to the Constitution, or the history of prior (successful and unsuccessful) attempts at amending the Constitution, or the process for doing so.

Common Reading: *Six Amendments: How and Why We Should Change the Constitution*, by John Paul Stevens (April 2014)

2nd & 4th Tuesday, p.m. – Room 5

Coordinators: Mary Watson 373-5431 & Patti Ialongo 641-7906

4. (ERR) TO ERR IS HUMAN?

To err is human, yet most of us go through life assuming (and sometimes insisting) that we are right about nearly everything, from the origins of the universe to how to load a dishwasher. In this course we will be guided by journalist Kathryn Schultz in an exploration of why we find it so gratifying to be right and so maddening to be mistaken. Drawing on thinkers as varied as Augustine, Freud, Greenspan and Groucho Marx, Schultz demonstrates that error is both a given and a gift—one that can transform our worldviews, our relationships and ourselves.

Our common reading will be *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error* by Kathryn Schulz. Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust, when asked earlier this year if there is a book she would recommend to all incoming freshman at Harvard, recommended *Being Wrong*, saying the book advocates doubt as a skill and praises error as the foundation of wisdom. President Bill Clinton recommends the book “if you want to feel better about not being perfect and see the potential upside of your errors.”

Common Reading: *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*
by Kathryn Schulz (2010)

1st & 3rd Monday, p.m. – Room 6

Coordinators: Karol McQueary 374-4197 & Zelda Green 377-9704

5. (EUR) LA BELLE ÉPOQUE 1900-1914: FIFTEEN EUPHORIC YEARS OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

It was a period characterized by optimism, peace at home and in Europe. On a poster symbolizing the times three women appear; one holding an electric battery, the second holds a cornucopia and the third an olive branch. In the background are smoking chimneys of the Second Industrial Revolution, which gave rise to the Parisian bourgeoisie, the nouveau-riches. Entertainment for this new class was provided by cabarets, bistros and music halls such as the Moulin Rouge and the Folies Bergere.

The Arts flourished. Impressionism gained popularity. There were large exhibits in which Cubism and Abstraction appeared. Art Nouveau emerged. Gauguin, Matisse, Bonnard, Rousseau, Toulouse-Lautrec and Picasso were some of the prominent artists then in Paris. Modern forms of sculpture were represented in the work of Auguste Rodin. Among the composers of the era were Satie, Debussy, Massenet, Sain-Saens and Ravel. Authors such as Guy de Maupassant and Emile Zola represented a major transformation to literary realism and naturalism.

There were great technological and scientific advancements. Technological developments in: the automobile and products such as the pneumatic tire; electricity that enabled Wirephoto and neon lights; cinema technology; aviation technology allowed France to assume leadership in the latter two fields. In Science there was the discovery of radioactivity, and the germ theory of disease that led to the establishment of the field of bacteriology. Louis Pasteur worked in antibiotics and a rabies vaccine.

It was an age influenced by and characterized by developments in electricity, architecture, the image of Woman, the decorative Arts, Great Exhibitions, the cult of speed in communications and transportation. - all enabled by this short period of peace and stability. Class members should have no problem finding a fascinating topic for a presentation.

Possible Common Reading:

Twilight of the Belle Epoque: The Paris of Picasso, Stravinsky, Proust, Renault, Marie Curie, Gertrude Stein, and Their Friends through the Great War, by Mary McAuliffe (March 2014)

1st & 3rd Thursday, p.m. – Room 6

Coordinators: Maria Ruiz 540-5635 & Laura Guneau 318-1163

6. (FSS) FILM OR SHORT STORY: WHICH IS BETTER?

Two of Omnilore's most popular kinds of classes are those dealing with short stories and those discussing movies. In this S/DG, you'll have the best of both worlds! Did you know that some of our favorite films actually began life as a short story? This S/DG gives you the opportunity to experience both and decide for yourself which works better. You'll read the original story and watch the film adaptation at home, then join in a discussion comparing and contrasting the two. Are the story lines, settings and characters the same or are they different? Did the transition from written page to theatrical experience alter what you felt? Did one turn out to be more effective and/or more entertaining than the other, or were both equally good in their own right? Voice and share your opinions with others, and plan to make it a lively discussion.

Our text will be *Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen, 35 Great Stories that Have Inspired Great Films*, edited by Stephanie Harrison. Each class member will pick one of the 35 and lead the discussion for that story/film. (Not all films will be covered this trimester.) Some of the films are well-known, others may be unfamiliar to you. Some are recent, while others are classic. There are a variety of genres from which to choose, including science-fiction, family, westerns, horror, comedy, and drama. Some of the titles with which you may be familiar are *Field of Dreams*, *Rear Window*, *Blow Up*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Common Reading: *Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen, 35 Great Stories that Have Inspired Great Films*, edited by Stephanie Harrison (April 2005)

FS1: 2nd & 4th Friday, a.m. – Conference Room B

Coordinators: Cheri Davis 514-3506 & Marty Leveille 545-6416

FS2: 2nd & 4th Thursday, a.m. – Conference Room B

Coordinators: Judy Bayer 375-0012 & Stu Watson 316-1366

7. (INC) WEALTH AND INCOME INEQUALITY IN AMERICA

Income inequality moved with astonishing speed from the boring backwaters of economic studies to “the defining challenge of our time.” Numerous recent articles have addressed the struggle of the lower economic classes, the increases in wealth and income for the “one per cent” and the financial hollowing out of the middle classes. What are the real statistics and the real reasons behind this spreading of the income distribution? And is it wrong - or is it required to foster hard work and entrepreneurs? This class will look for the best data available and explore implications of increasing inequality for the future. Possible presentations include rising compensation for chief executives, inequality in other countries, the effect of death transfers on wealth inequality, the superrich and how long they stay in the top 400 taxpayers, etc. The proposed text is a best seller written by a French economist that proposes an approach to reducing inequality: a global progressive tax on wealth and higher marginal rates for many.

Other references and sources for presentation topics include

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/23/opinion/sutter-99-inequality-must-read/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/23/upshot/the-american-middle-class-is-no-longer-the-worlds-richest.html?hp>

Common Reading: *Capital in the Twenty First Century*, by Thomas Piketty & Arthur Goldhammer (March 2014)

IN1: 2nd & 4th Thursday, p.m. – Room 5

Coordinators: Joy Jurena 739-6562 & Jim Slattery 542-2361

IN2: 1st & 3rd Tuesday, a.m. – Conference Room B

Coordinators: Donald Tloutan 833-3987 & Clifford Brodsky 483-3119

8. (MCR) DEADLY COMPANIONS: HOW MICROBES SHAPED OUR HISTORY

We are surrounded by billions of bacteria. Most of those that we breathe in with air and ingest in food and water are harmless. Those that dwell within our bodies provide

protection against invaders. Bacteria can turn against us when our resistance is diminished, however, causing diseases such as diphtheria, whooping cough and pneumonia. Those like cholera or plague bacilli can spread rapidly among the adult population, leading to global epidemics and economic disasters.

Amazingly, bacteria were not identified and their effects recognized until the 19th century. Since then major improvements have occurred in environmental hygiene and the preparation of protective antibacterial vaccines. Presentations can address specific bacterial-caused diseases, the efficacy of antibiotics, or any current research in this area. Our common reading will be the highly accessible *Deadly Companions: How Microbes Shaped Our History* by Dorothy H. Crawford and become better acquainted with disease-causing bacteria and their role in human lives.

Common Reading: *Deadly Companions: How Microbes Shaped Our History*
by Dorothy H. Crawford (February 2009)

1st & 3rd Thursday, p.m. – Conference Room B

Coordinators: Jean Custer 539-4797 & Bill Gargaro 316-1588

9. (MND) THE SCIENTIFIC QUEST TO UNDERSTAND, ENHANCE, AND EMPOWER THE MIND

“In this expansive, illuminating journey through the mind theoretical physicist Michio Kaku (Physics of the Future) explores fantastical realms of science fiction that may soon become our reality. His futuristic framework merges physics with neuroscience...applied to demonstrations that "show proof-of-principle" in accomplishing what was previously fictional: that minds can be read, memories can be digitally stored, and intelligences can be improved to great extents. The discussion, while engaging, clear, and replete with cinematic references...These new frontiers make for captivating reading." --Publishers Weekly”

“Mind-bending...Kaku has a gift for explaining incredibly complex concepts, on subjects as far-ranging as nanotechnology and space travel, in language the lay reader can grasp....engrossing.”--San Francisco Chronicle

This Study and discussion group will focus on the late research advances and discoveries about the human brain and all its complexity. Many presentation topics are related: telepathy, altered memories, increasing intelligence, electrical stimulation, comatose patients, depression and the brain, Post Traumatic Stress, Syndrome, the new born brain, and the aging brain, to name just a few.

Reading and discussing this “book could be a seriously mind-opening experience.”
--Booklist

Common Reading: *The Future of the Mind: The Scientific Quest to Understand, Enhance, and Empower the Mind* by Michio Kaku (February 2014)

MN1: 1st & 3rd Wednesday, a.m. – Conference Room B

Coordinators: Gary Nofziger 221-0715 & Helen Leven 372-4418

MN2: 2nd & 4th Monday, p.m. – Room 5

Coordinators: Norman Morris 755-5102 & Marilyn Brashear 316-0735

10. (NET) HOW THE INTERNET IS CHANGING OUR LIVES

The Internet has been publicly available for only twenty years, yet it is the catalyst of the widest and fastest technological revolution in history. Its effects have touched practically every citizen in the world. Its mass adoption has been swifter than that of any technology in history. It's impossible today to imagine the world without the Internet: it enables us to do things which only a few years ago would have been unthinkable, and impinges on every sphere of our lives.

Join us as we delve into a series of essays recently published by MIT, authored by experts from around the world, which discuss how the Internet affects education, politics, business, language, music, culture and more. Certain to be fascinating!

Suggested Reading: *Change: 19 Key Essays on How the Internet Is Changing Our Lives* (available in Kindle, EPub, and PDF formats via https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/book/19-key-essays-on-how-internet-is-changing-our-lives/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=techreview&utm_content=&utm_campaign=MITchange)

Essay Titles Include:

- The Internet of Things: Outlook and Challenges
- The Internet and Business
- The Music Industry in an Age of Digital Distribution
- The Way of the Dodo
- The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective
- How the Internet Has Changed Everyday Life
- Knowledge Banking for a Hyperconnected Society
- Who Owns Big Data?
- The Internet, Politics and the Politics of Internet Debate

1st & 3rd Monday, p.m. – Room 5

Coordinators: Chuck Gray 214-9640 & Barbara Case 540-6465

11. (NYR) COVERING *THE NEW YORKER*

Many Omniloreans enjoy reading *The New Yorker* magazine...whether it is the articles, essays or cartoons! Topics include the arts, politics, culture, short story fiction and even poetry. This S/DG will examine the contents of the current issue through participants who have volunteered to become “watchers” of a magazine section ranging from the cover through to movie reviews.

This will be followed at each session by an in depth discussion of a previously assigned article from a past issue that all participants have read and led by the volunteer who selected the article.

No Common Reading: Weekly issues of *The New Yorker* magazine obtained through subscription, newsstand purchase or local library reading room.

2nd & 4th Wednesday, p.m. – Room 6

Coordinators: Frank Reiner 648-8951 & Leslie Schettler 377-0822

12. (PHL) BRUSH UP ON YOUR PHILOSOPHY

If you're like most of us, Zeno, Socrates, Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche sound only vaguely familiar and we wish we had the time, to acquire a basic familiarity with the history of philosophy. *A Passion for Wisdom* is a lively, accessible, and highly enjoyable tour of the world's great ideas. Our text tells the story of philosophy's development with great clarity and refreshing wit. We'll explore all the major categories of philosophy, from metaphysics and ethics to politics and logic. We'll talk about the intellectual tradition stretching back over three thousand years. Some suggestions for research presentation: philosophers and their lives, philosophies and their arguments, periods and regions, pertinence to our lives today, etc. There will be ample opportunity to explore some subjects (your favorite?) more deeply for group presentations and discussions.

Common Reading: *A Passion for Wisdom*, by Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins (1999)

1st & 3rd Tuesday, p.m. – Room 5

Coordinators: Charles Golden 750-8585 & Sally Moite 377-6790

13. (PRK) AMERICA'S BEST IDEA: THE NATIONAL PARKS

America's national parks spring from an idea as radical as the Declaration of Independence: that the nation's most magnificent and sacred places should be preserved, not for royalty or the rich, but for everyone. This S/DG will delve into the history of the park idea, from the first sighting by white men in 1851 of the valley that would become Yosemite and the creation of the world's first national park at Yellowstone in 1872, through the most recent additions to a system that now encompasses nearly four hundred sites and 84 million acres.

Master filmmaker Ken Burns has created a 6 part series delving into the history of the National Park System from 1851 to 1980. We will watch each episode at home and one member will lead the discussion of the episode. Additionally, each member will research and present on a relevant topic. It can be more detailed information about the formation of the system or a selection of a specific national park and talk about the history of its region and its significance. This is not a class to show "family vacation" pictures but rather an intellectual pursuit of the information around our National Parks System.

Common Reading: *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, 6 episodes, by Ken Burns (September 2009)

2nd & 4th Tuesday, p.m. – Room 6

Coordinators: Florence Murphy 514-1415 & Lynn Anderson 212-7665

14. (SHK) SHAKESPEARE: ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE ...

The Omnilorean New Globe Theater plans a September-December season, breaking our usual pattern and reading two of the Bard's Tragedies and one History play. With players standing and with a few props, we propose to do reading walk-throughs of **Titus Andronicus**, **Henry IV Part 1**, and all-time favorite **Hamlet**.

In this S/DG you will learn how to research all perspectives of Shakespeare's works — sources of each play upon which the Bard builds rich characters and enhances the plots, how to play each character "in character," themes, symbols, images, motifs, commentary on issues of the day, and all manner of *rhyme and reason*. Class members each serve on one play's Board of Directors, responsible for casting roles for the repertory and leading discussions based on the research — optionally adding videos, music, and costumes. For a glimpse of how we live the Bard in this S/DG, check out <http://omnilore.org/members/Curriculum/SDGs/14a-SHK-Shakespeare> to view the past spring Shakespeare class's website of links to references relevant to our plays and downloadable organizing artifacts.

There are no prerequisites, theatrical or otherwise. You will find that the Bard of Stratford-on-Avon will teach us, just as he's taught others for four hundred years. With plenty for the novice as well as the veteran, it is a *foregone conclusion* members will leave this class with a fuller understanding of the masterful story construction, realistic characters with depth and humanity, and the rich, evocative language which have earned William Shakespeare the title of greatest writer in the English language.

Common Reading: Selected Plays

2nd & 4th Thursday, p.m. – Room 6

Coordinator: Hal Hart 375-1851

15. (SSS) SOUTHERN SHORT STORIES

What makes the literature of the South so distinct? Who are the best known authors and what is it about their work that brands it Southern? The literature of the modern South reflects a once-rural society's storytelling tradition and the painful contradictions and cultural clashes brought about by rapid change. This excellent collection includes works by Truman Capote, James Agee, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Anne Tyler, Reynolds Price, and many others.

Common Reading: *Stories of the Modern South: Revised Edition* (August 1995)

SS1: 1st & 3rd Thursday, p.m. – Room 5

Coordinators: Patricia Digre 379-9383 & Jade Suzanne Neely 378-9525

SS2: 2nd & 4th Monday, p.m. – Room 6

Coordinators: Vickie Volchok 326-2347 & Gloria Dumais 325-5251

SS3: 2nd & 4th Wednesday, a.m. – Conference Room B

Coordinators: Anne Coniglio 328-9258 & Marilyn Landau 514-3535

16. (TED) TED TALKS: IDEAS WORTH SPREADING

A click on www.ted.com will take you to an unusual and fascinating website – TED talks. TED is a nonprofit organization devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. It started out (in 1984) as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, and Design. Since then its scope has become ever broader, adding people from the worlds of Arts, Business, Culture, Science, and Global Issues. The annual TED Conference has been held in Long Beach, California although it is moving next year.

Other TED conferences are held in other locations and sometimes address a specific topic like medicine. At all these conferences TED brings together some of the world's most fascinating thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give the talk of their lives (in 18 minutes). These are, for the most part, riveting talks by remarkable people made available free to the world online.

Omnilore S/DG participants click on ted.com, select a talk and do research on the subject and/or the speaker. The talk will serve as a nucleus for the presentation. At the meeting before the presentation the presenter provides the group with a handout announcing the talk chosen and questions or ideas for consideration leading to discussion. Group members watch the talk on their computer at home and come prepared for informed discussion

This S/DG has been offered several times previously, the last time in Fall 2012. With more than 450 talks now available and more added each week there are plenty of talks that have not been subjects of the earlier classes.

No Common Reading.

TE1: 2nd & 4th Tuesday, a.m. – Conference Room B

Coordinators: Ellen Tarlow 937-9111 & Barbara Torday 374-1668

TE2: 2nd & 4th Friday, p.m. – Room 5

Coordinators: Vickie Volchok 326-2347 & Helen Stockwell 374-1535

17. (USA) MEN WHO UNITED THE STATES

The U.S. was settled by a diverse population across a vast and varied landscape. What held it together and provided the foundation for its growth? Follow in the footsteps of America's most essential and eccentric explorers, thinkers, and innovators, such as Lewis and Clark and the leaders of the Great Surveys; the builders of the first transcontinental telegraph and the powerful civil engineer behind the Interstate Highway System to look at the links and threads that pulled the country into a cohesive unity, then held it together. Simon Winchester's book *"The Men Who United the States: America's Explorers, Inventors, Eccentrics and Mavericks, and the Creation of One Nation, Indivisible"* covers and illuminates the background of those who toiled fearlessly to discover, connect, and bond the citizenry and geography of the U.S.A. from its beginnings. S/DG presentations could cover a range of topics: specific individuals in more detail; technologies that evolved to make it possible; economic winners/losers; natural resources gained/lost.

Common Reading: *The Men Who United the States: America's Explorers, Inventors, Eccentrics and Mavericks, and the Creation of One Nation, Indivisible*, by Simon Winchester (October 2013)

1st & 3rd Thursday, a.m. – Conference Room B

Coordinators: Janet Brown 379-8346 & H.E. Kamiya 530-8544

18. (WIN) WINSTON CHURCHILL – HIS LIFE AND LEGACY

Soldier, parliamentarian, prime minister, orator, painter, writer, husband, and leader – all of these facets combined to make Winston Churchill one of the most complex and fascinating personalities in history.

Consider the various phases of his career – from his adventures as a young cavalry officer in the service of the empire to his role as an elder statesman prophesying the advent of the cold war. These show how Churchill's immense adaptability and innate pugnacity made him a formidable leader for the better part of a century. The man's humor, resilience, courage, and eccentricity led to some amazing accomplishments. Some historians have asserted that Winston Churchill (1874–1965) was the 20th century's most valuable figure. No man did more to preserve freedom and democracy.

An ambitious, world-traveling soldier and bestselling author, Churchill was already famous upon entering Parliament in 1899 and within a decade was working with Lloyd George to pass the great reforms of 1908–1911.

Accounts prevail of Churchill's prescient denunciations of Hitler and heroics during the early days of WWII. Some conclude that Churchill was a thoroughly likable great man with many irritating flaws but no nasty ones: he lacked malice, avoided grudges, vendettas and blame shifting, and quickly replaced enmity with friendship. The assigned text will be supplemented by presentations on various aspects of his life so that we may appreciate the interplay between the man and the period. Topics for presentations might include his young life and heritage, his failures and recovery, his successes and disasters, his profound prophecies, his supreme power and frustrations, and his later life.

Common Reading: *Churchill*, by Paul Johnson (November 2009)

1st & 3rd Wednesday, p.m. – Room 6

Coordinators: Howard Korman 373-2442 & Gaylee Cabral 872-3775