

TOPICS OFFERED FOR SUMMER 2018

*Classes start May 1st and end August 31st.
Holiday periods are adapted to by individual class voting.*

1. (AAF) BEST AFRICAN AMERICAN FICTION

Dealing with all aspects of life, from the pain of war to the warmth of family, these tales in *Best African American Fiction 2010* are a tribute to the imaginations thriving in today's black literary community. As the editor, Gerald Early, says in his preface: *"There is no attempt to present these short stories as writing from the black world, if there is such a thing. It is rather varieties of literary experience. If there is a black world, there are worlds within that world, worlds that include people who are not black, that include the living and the dead, the past and the present. It might be better to say that there is a black cosmos of a sort, within which are a complex set of worlds that sometimes collide and sometimes converge."* This S/DG will read and discuss the stories and experience in some measure that unpredictable but always spellbinding dynamic.

Guest editor of the book is noted author and poet, Nikki Giovanni. Stories include contributions from such known authors as Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, Edwidge Danticat, Colson Whitehead, and Jesmyn Ward as well as many lesser known talents. There is also a mix of styles, from highly avant-garde next to what is called urban literature.

As Nikki Giovanni says... *"We tell tales to change our hearts and minds, to educate and delight. We sit by the campfire of our hearts, with our loving and trusty dog at our side, and we read."*

Common Reading: *Best African American Fiction 2010*, edited by Gerald Early (December 2009; available in hardback and paperback)

2. (BIT) BITCOIN MANIA: HOW BITCOIN AND BLOCKCHAIN ARE CHALLENGING THE GLOBAL WORLD ORDER

Bitcoin can buy you anything from a slice of pizza to a luxury villa. It might be worth anything from a few dollars to a few thousand dollars. As mysterious as it is disruptive, it is at once everywhere and nowhere at all, a cyber-enigma that raises the question: What is Bitcoin, and why should anyone care about it anyway?

Bitcoin is going for a wild rise, and it pops up in the news almost every day. You've probably heard that in December 2017 it rose 40% in 40 hours reaching \$16,000, giving it a year-to-date gain of over 1,500%. This S/DG will introduce us to Bitcoin, cryptocurrency and blockchain; and it will examine the ideological and technical roots of cryptocurrency as it explores its economic and political impact.

Possible presentation topics include the following: meanings of the terms Bitcoin, digital currency, cryptocurrency and blockchain; origin and evolution of Bitcoin; comparison of Bitcoin to other types of currency; criminals and Bitcoin; Bitcoin in the mainstream; investment in Bitcoin; Federal Reserve and Bitcoin.

Common Reading: *Digital Gold, Bitcoin and the Inside Story of the Misfits and Millionaires Trying to Reinvent Money*, by Nathaniel Popper (May 2016)

3. (BMU) A LOVE AFFAIR WITH BROADWAY MUSICALS

For almost a century, Americans have been losing their hearts and minds in an insatiable love affair with American musicals.

In this course, we will be reading Jack Viertel's book of how Broadway shows are built and include snippets of actual Broadway musicals to either view parts of DVDs or listen to a variety of memorable music from showstoppers. There will be presentations from class members of the chapters and a chance to share their favorite Broadway shows. This gives us an opportunity to see what it takes to create a Broadway hit and to affirm why Americans will always keep coming back for more.

Common Reading: *The Secret Life of the American Musical - How Broadway Shows are Built*, by Jack Viertel, (2016)

4. (BRN) BRAIN RULES FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING

How come I can never find my keys? Why don't I sleep as well as I used to? Why do my friends keep repeating the same stories? What can I do to keep my brain sharp? These and numerous other topics will be explored in this S/DG. We will learn about how the brain works and how to get the most out of it. For example, memory--an act we take for granted--is a deep mystery that we still don't understand. We will show that knowing how your brain functions is part of knowing yourself. If you want to understand your brain and improve it, then this S/DG is for you.

Presentations can be based on recent advances in brain science and brain psychology. Examples are (1) using mindfulness to improve your brain functions, (2) how learning or teaching benefits your brain, (3) training your brain with video games, and (4) how getting sufficient sleep improves clear thinking.

Common Reading: *Brain Rules for Aging Well; 10 Principles for Staying Vital, Happy, and Sharp*, by John Medina, (2017)

5. (CHN) CHINA AWAKES AND SHAKES THE WORLD

"China," Napoleon once remarked, "is a sleeping lion. Let her sleep, for when she wakes she will shake the world." In 2014, President Xi Jinping triumphantly declared that the lion had awoken. Under Xi, China is pursuing an increasingly ambitious foreign policy with the aim of restoring its historical status as the dominant power in Asia. From the Mekong Basin to the Central Asian steppe, the country is wooing its neighbors with promises of new roads, railways, dams, and power grids. Chinese trade and investment present huge opportunities for China's neighbors, but it also threatens them with exploitation.

This S/DG will focus on how China is attempting to restore its historical position as the dominant power in Asia. We will learn about the power of Xi Jinping and his plans to grow his country economically and politically.

Possible presentation topics: Xi Jinping, Cleaning up Beijing, Territorial Ambitions, China and North Korea, the Silk Road, Growth in China's Economy, China in World Trade, Control of A. China Sea, Human Rights Issues, Population Surveillance.

Common Reading: *China's Asian Dream: Empire Building along the New Silk Road* by Tom Miller (February 15, 2017)

6. (COD) SMASHING CODES FOR FORTY YEARS

Every world war has many well-known personalities whose activities are chronicled for all to know and understand. Yet, in every war, there are individuals working diligently behind the scenes who provide major efforts in the battle to achieve victory. This S/DG will look at the life of Elizebeth Smith who played an integral role in our nation's history for forty years beginning in 1916 where she applied her skills to the government's new venture of code-breaking.

Within this secret government area, she would meet her husband, a groundbreaking cryptologist, and use her talents during both of the world wars as well as to help catch gangsters/smugglers during Prohibition and to identify Nazi spies during the war and later in South America. Looking at America's code-breaking history through the prism of Smith's life, discussions and presentations can focus on the unforgettable events during that time in history and the many colorful personalities that helped shape our modern intelligence organizations.

Common Reading: *The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies* by Jason Fagone (September 2017)

7. (ELE) SIMPLY ELECTRIFYING: THE TECHNOLOGY THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Imagine your life without the Internet. Without phones. Without television. Without sprawling cities. Without the freedom to continue working and playing after the sun goes down. Electricity plays a fundamental role not only in our everyday lives but also in history's most pivotal events, from global climate change and the push for wind- and solar-generated electricity to Japan's nuclear accident at Fukushima and Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Our common reading brings to life the 250-year history of electricity through the stories of the men and women who used it to transform our world: Benjamin Franklin, James Watt, Michael Faraday, Samuel F.B. Morse, Thomas Edison, Samuel Insull, Albert Einstein, Rachel Carson, Elon Musk, and more. In the process, it reveals for the first time the complete, thrilling, and often-dangerous story of electricity's historic discovery, development, and worldwide application, including the full range of factors that shaped the electricity business over time—science, technology, law, politics, government regulation, economics, business

strategy, and culture—before looking forward toward the exhilarating prospects for electricity generation and use that will shape our future.

There are many possible areas for presentation, including past inventions and inventors as well as a look to the future, including battery technology, electric cars, renewable sources of energy, and more

Common Reading: *Simply Electrifying: The Technology That Changed the World, from Benjamin Franklin to Elon Musk*, by Craig R. Roach (July 25, 2017)

8. (HMO) HOMO DEUS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOMORROW

First, Yuval Harari wrote *Sapiens*, a *New York Times* bestseller. This is about the next stage of evolution, *Homo Deus*, man as god, and what's on deck now that famine, plagues, and war have largely been eliminated as threats.

Already, for the first time ever, more people die from eating too much than from eating too little; more people die from old age than from infectious diseases; and more people commit suicide than are killed by soldiers, terrorists and criminals put together. The average American is a thousand times more likely to die from binging on TV and snacks than from being blown up by Al Qaeda.

Novels about a supercomputer taking over, such as the *Colossus* trilogy by D. F. Jones, usually assume that once it was designed, that would be it, no more changes. The TV series "Person of Interest", and the movie "Her" cast a wider net, with the operating system itself evolving.

This book shows the possibilities of man and machine co-evolving.

Possible presentations:

- How can technology solve the problems it is currently causing (because technology won't stop)?
- In what insidious ways are artificial intelligences already manipulating us?
- Can the supercomputer Watson stop fooling around with "Jeopardy" and the Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and find directions we might try, to solve problems too complex for us to even fully understand?
- Are we done yet with asking God and government to solve our problems? Will capitalism become even more short-lived than either one?

Common Reading: *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, by Yuval Harari (February 2017)

9. (IRN) UNDERSTANDING IRAN

Iran is a land of contradictions. It is an Islamic republic, but one in which only 1.4 percent of the population attend Friday prayers. It restricts women in their dress codes, but 60 percent of students in university are women. The religious culture is dogmatic, yet its poetry dwells on wine, beauty and sex. It is one of the oldest continuous civilizations in the world, yet has undergone immense changes since the 1979 revolution. Understanding it and particularly the struggles within Islam and the profound cultural differences between Persians and Arabs will be of great

help in getting a better grasp on much of the geopolitical, religious, economic and cultural controversies that surround the Middle East today. Presentation topics could include Iran's economic system, recent history, ancient Persian history, Shiite Islamic law, current political system, Persian art and literature, women's rights, human rights, technology, nuclear power, oil supplies and policies, and biographies of Khomeini, Khamenei, Khatami, or Ahmadinejad.

Common Reading: *A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind*, by Michael Axworthy (May 24, 2016)

10. (KIS) HENRY KISSINGER: THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF FOREIGN POLICY IN OUR TIME

Henry Kissinger is one of the few political scientists who have had the opportunity to put theories into practice. He had a distinguished academic career, including authorship of important books on international relations, followed by a career in government and then by a career in the private sector advising businesses about foreign affairs. He has also written a great deal about his government years and about his views of foreign policy. By reading books by him and about him, we can get perspective on all of the American foreign policy decisions from the Cold War through the present.

Kissinger is no shrinking violet. While in government, he voiced and acted on his views, engaged in serious infighting with other administration officials and was a genuine self-promoter. As a result, Kissinger has remained controversial, praised by some and excoriated by others, and we would expect to see both views expressed in our discussions.

Examples such as these issues raised by Kissinger's theories and policies should make for lively discussions: Is military power all that matters? Should human rights be a factor in foreign policy? How seriously should we take our treaty commitments? How much support should we give to dictators who support our policies? When should, and when shouldn't, we negotiate with our enemies? Should overall principles or day-to-day tactical decisions dictate our policies? What are the limits of personal diplomacy?

Common Reading: *World Order*, by Henry Kissinger (Reprint Edition September 2014)

11. (LDV) LEONARDO DA VINCI - RENAISSANCE GENIUS

Leonardo is known as THE Renaissance man, embodying the creativity of the "many-sided people" of the Renaissance". In this new best seller by Walter Isaacson, the author of biographies of Einstein and Steve Jobs, we find much never before published. Isaacson uses his subject's contradictions to give him humanity and depth. A dandy, known for his bright pink clothing, Leonardo lived at times in rooms full of dissected bodies. A vegetarian who bought birds so that he could set them free, he designed killing machines. A connoisseur of grotesques, he painted glorious, glowing angels. As Isaacson follows Leonardo from one locale and occupation to another, his energy never fails and his curiosity never dims. Again and again he turns up a surprising and revelatory detail — the

averted eyes that suggest Leonardo used mirrors to create a marvelous late self-portrait, human vertebrae drawn with precision and delicacy. Presentations could focus on his painting, medical discoveries, engineering concepts or even his theories on manned flight. Due to the book's length the class may choose to cover only selected portions.

Common Reading: *Leonardo da Vinci*, by Walter Isaacson (October 17, 2017)

12. (MOR) BEING MORTAL - AGING, PREPARING FOR THE PROCESS AND UNDERSTANDING IT

From the book:

"It began with a tingle in the surgeon's fingers and a pain in his neck. A couple of years later, he learned he had a tumor inside his spinal cord. That was when the difficult choices began. Should he have it removed right away in a risky operation, as his doctor recommended? Or should he take time to consider this question: At what point would the expanding tumor cause debility bad enough to justify the risk of greater debility or even death in trying to fight it?" (*New York Times*, Sheri Fink, Nov. 6, 2014)

The surgeon in the story is the father of Atul Gawande, who is also a surgeon as well as a writer for *The New Yorker*. His new book, *Being Mortal*, is a personal meditation on how we can better live with age-related frailty, serious illness and approaching death.

It is also a call for a change in the philosophy of health care.

Since the book was published, and since it was offered as an Omnimore book club selection and then as an S/DG, a lot has happened with healthcare, right to die legislation and other medical issues.

Presentations could cover anything from dying with dignity, to hospice, to nursing care facilities and their alternatives, to geriatrics, to personal experiences.

Dr. Gawande continues to write articles for *The New Yorker*, which could provide additional ideas for presentations.

Common Reading: *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* by Atul Gawande (September 2017)

13. (NYC) NEW YORK CITY: THE CITY OF DREAMS

Be prepared for a roller coaster ride. This is a sweeping history of New York from the early colonial period, and its relationship to surrounding states and the emerging nation. The story of the birth of New York City is the story of our national struggle to integrate groups of immigrants from all over the world as they became 'Americans' and we became a nation of laws and individual freedoms. We will read the stories of families who left everything they had elsewhere, to come and participate in the development of this country.

This suggested common reading is rich in detail and is based on astonishing historical research. Through this reading and related presentations, we will gain

an understanding of the depth of our struggle as a people, not only as people of New York, but as people of our nation.

Presentations can explore the struggles and contributions of any of the immigrant groups over New York's 400-year history.

Common Reading: *City of Dreams: The 400-Year Epic History of Immigrant New York* by Tyler Anbinder (October 10, 2017)

14. (PHY) THE GREAT PHYSICISTS FROM GALILEO TO EINSTEIN

Widely recognized as one of the 20th century's foremost physicists, George Gamow was also an unusually capable popularizer of science. His talents are vividly revealed in this exciting and penetrating explanation of how the central laws of physical science evolved — from Pythagoras' discovery of frequency ratios in the 6th century B.C. to today's research on elementary particles. Unlike many books on physics which focus entirely on fact and theory with little or no historic detail, this volume incorporates fascinating personal and biographical data about the great physicists of past and present. Thus Dr. Gamow discusses on an equal basis the trial of Galileo and his discovery of the basic laws of mechanics and offers personal recollections of Niels Bohr along with a detailed discussion of Bohr's atomic model. You'll also find revealing glimpses of Newton, Huygens, Heisenberg, Pauli, Einstein, and many other immortals of science. The aim of this book is to give the reader the feeling of what physics is, and what kind of people physicists are. This delightfully informal approach, combined with the book's clear, easy-to-follow explanations, will especially appeal to young readers but will stimulate and entertain science enthusiasts of all ages.

Topics for presentation can expand on any of the discoveries discussed in the core text, scientists biographies, or present other areas of physics.

Common Reading: *The Great Physicists from Galileo to Einstein (Biography of Physics)*, by George Gamow (October 1988)

15. (PRS) THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY: ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

“Can the President do that?”

“Of course he can. He’s the most powerful man in the world.”

Both these viewpoints reflect the opinions of many Americans. The office of the U.S. Presidency is complex and cloaked in American mythology and often not well understood by the American people.

Charles O. Jones, in his book *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*, strives to acquaint the reader with the problems facing the founding fathers as they attempted to replace a weak confederation of states with a more effective form of government.

A leader was needed, but how to make certain that that leader did not become a tyrant like the king they had just renounced? The title for the office was important. “President” from praesidere--“to preside”--was chosen because it was more neutral, less commanding than other governing titles. The President would govern

within a constitutional construction that divided up power among the legislative, judicial and executive branches. Jones offers the thought that the phrase - *separating to unify* - provides “a basis for understanding American government and politics.”

Having established the basis for the office, Jones goes on to elaborate on the powers and limitations of the office and discusses the evolution of powers using examples of various Presidents.

This class will study the foundation of the office, the Constitutional basis and the evolution of the powers of the office. Discussions and presentations may be based upon the philosophy of the founding fathers, historical instances enhancing the powers, the present understanding of the office (which is open to wide speculation), the world leadership role, etc.

Common Reading: *The American Presidency: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd Edition by Charles O. Jones (July 1, 2016)

16. (ROM) THE ROMANOVS

The Romanovs were the most successful dynasty of modern times, ruling a sixth of the world’s surface for three centuries. They turned a war-ruined principality into the world’s greatest empire and then lost it all. Their story is of twenty tsars and tsarinas, some touched by genius, some by madness--but all inspired by holy autocracy and imperial ambition. Ruling Russia was a sacred imperial mission filled with danger, as six of the last twelve tsars were murdered.

This S/DG will review the Romanovs’ secret world of unlimited power and ruthless empire-building, overshadowed by palace conspiracy, family rivalries, sexual decadence and wild extravagance, with a global cast of adventurers, courtesans, revolutionaries and poets, from Ivan the Terrible to Tolstoy and Pushkin, to Bismarck, Lincoln, Queen Victoria and Lenin. Any one of these participants in this imperial environment would make for a good presentation topic. Other topics could be the evidence of the life-style left behind as seen today in the palaces of Catherine and Peter the Great; life outside of the elite circle; events globally that impacted Russia; and how the excesses contributed to the dramatic change post-Romanovs.

Common Reading: *The Romanovs: 1613-1918*, by Simon Sebag Montefiore (May 2016)

17. (RTE) READERS' THEATRE EXPERIENCE

In amateur circles throughout the country, opportunities to participate in Readers' Theatre have become extremely popular. This class will focus on contemporary American plays. Highlighted will be the plays of August Wilson, Pulitzer Prize winner for Drama. Each work is set in a different decade and depicts comic and tragic aspects of the African-American experience in the 20th century: *The Piano Lesson* - 1930s, *Seven Guitars* - 1940s, *Fences* - 1950s, *Jitney* - 1970s, *Radio Golf* - 1990s, just to mention a few. The class will read the plays at home utilizing libraries and Internet sources. The presenter of the selection will generate

questions regarding the elements of good script writing (plot, character analysis, conflicts, resolutions, etc.) as this applies to the plays reviewed. After a class discussion based on these questions, snippets of the actual dialogue will be read extemporaneously by class members. As a group, we will strive for an enjoyable Readers' Theatre experience. Here's your opportunity to be a star on our own "Broadway Stage".

Common Reading. *A. Wilson in an Hour*, by Joan Herrington (2009)

18. (SCI) A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SCIENCE: A SHORT HISTORY OF NEARLY EVERYTHING

This S/DG offers an overview of key science topics, the history of discovery, and the philosophical questions modern science raises.

The core book in this S/DG, Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything* was on the best-seller list for six months. It is written for the general reader, providing an accessible description of "nearly everything" in science, from the Big Bang to genetics. The hi-story discusses the sometimes-amazing way discoveries were made, how they were often controversial even when right, and the strange personalities and behavior of many of the discoverers. Bryson's entertaining book was published in 2003, so each session can be supplemented with brief articles from the Web when necessary to bring the science up to date.

Discussion will be driven in part by the incredible things that had to happen for there to be humans even capable of discovering what drives our universe and makes us possible. We will discuss questions raised by the reading, how it helps us understand our current world and its challenges, and the philosophical implications of what we know about our world.

Come join us in this fascinating exploration of our world and universe and be filled with wonder at our universe and all the things we know and don't know about it!

Common Reading: *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, by Bill Bryson (2003)

19. (TDT) TERRORISM AND DOMESTIC TERRORISM

We live in an era dominated by terrorism but struggle to understand its meaning and the real nature of the threat. Our understanding of terrorism is rooted in an emotional reaction and moral revulsion. Terrorism is a strategy that makes use of certain tactics or a means to an end. By examining the common traits associated with terrorism, one will see how much continuity exists between the ancient and modern worlds.

In this S/DG, we will attempt to make sense of the history of terrorism by examining it within its broad political, religious and social contexts and tracing its development from the ancient world to the 21st century. We will look at how the definition of the word has changed, how the tactics and strategies of terrorism have evolved, and how those who have used it adapted to revolutions in technology, communications and political ideologies. We will look at the history of terrorism which includes the major actors and organizations presented alongside

the salient details of the political, social, cultural, religious, and economic environments that gave their acts meaning--in other words, the history of terrorism and the history of the societies that spawned it.

Consider the following subjects for presentations: jihadist violence, state terror, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, Northern Ireland, anarcho-terrorism, the Ku Klux Klan, plus lesser known movements in Uruguay and Algeria, as well as the pre-modern uses of terror in ancient Rome, medieval Europe, and the French Revolution, Jewish history, “radical” religious beliefs, social responsibility, genocide, rise of neo-Nazis and white supremacists and why they are on the rise; holocausts in history; Radical Islam and understanding why it exists, Osama bin Laden and the founding of al-Qaeda; the rise of Nazi Germany.

Possible Common Reading:

Terrorism: A History (Themes in History), by Randall D. Law (September 2016, 2nd Edition)

Inside Terrorism, by Bruce Hoffman (September 2017)

20. (USG) ULYSSES S. GRANT

“Chernow is clearly out to find undiscovered nobility in his story, and he succeeds; he also finds uncannily prescient tragedy. There are ways in which Grant’s times eerily resemble our own.

It’s jolting to read about how the Union’s Civil War victory proved to be a beginning, not an ending; how it led to a spike in white supremacist groups and their efforts to keep newly enfranchised black men from voting; how the president who succeeded Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, seemed determined to undo the Union’s success; how the voting rights for freed male slaves guaranteed by the 15th Amendment were allowed to erode; how the once squeaky-clean Grant began surrounding himself with rich friends and became embroiled in financial scandal once he attained the power of the presidency.

Also eerie is how Grant the politician came to value loyalty over ideology, and how stories of Ku Klux Klan atrocities were dismissed by Southerners as ‘fairy tales’ — i.e., fake news. Then there’s the fact that when Grant moved into the White House, he had a statue of Thomas Jefferson, the slave owner, removed from the north lawn and sent to the Capitol....

...But *Grant* is vast and panoramic in ways that history buffs will love. Books of its caliber by writers of Chernow’s stature are rare, and this one qualifies as a major event. “

Presentations could be about Grant’s role in the Civil War, or his term as president; many topics are covered—reconstruction, the KKK, the portrayal of the southern culture in *Gone with the Wind*...; other presentations could explore the South today, the building of monuments, white supremacists, voting rights, etc.

Common Reading: *Grant*, by Ron Chernow (October 10, 2017)

21. (WON) WELFARE OF NATIONS

Welfare states have spread across the advanced world and are changing the very nature of modern civilization. The form and function of various welfare systems are varied and so is their effectiveness. Some countries have had to scale back their programs to avoid economic problems. The USA is currently struggling with the question of what extent and style of welfare system the country is willing to support.

This S/DG will look at various systems around the world to try to assess what works and what is not so good. Possible research/presentation topics might include: how important is homogeneity of the population; what are the social priorities in countries studied; why do similar programs in different countries provide different results; why is high unemployment so common in countries with extensive welfare systems; etc.

Common Reading: *The Welfare of Nations*, by James Bartholomew (CATO, November 2016)

22. (WRI) CALLING ALL WRITERS

Are you one of those people who grabs paper and pencil (or places fingers on a keyboard) and puts words on paper? If so, you are a writer.

People write for various reasons. Some write to capture memories. Some write to feel fully alive. Some write to make a name for themselves. Some write to change the world. Some write to find meaning. Humans have a built-in need to make our mark on the world. We want to bring new things to life, to mold things into the image we have in our imaginations, to subdue the earth. We write not just to change the world, but to create a new world.

This S/DG is an invitation to writers to come together, study the craft of writing, share ideas and share their actual writing with others. The group will use the book *"Making a Literary Life"* by Carolyn See as a springboard for writing ideas and motivation. The class meetings will consist of short presentations on writing techniques and prompts followed by a sharing of the member's writing...not for critique but for inspiration. If you are a writer or if you are a "wanna-be" writer, this S/DG is for you. Everyone has a story to tell!

Common Reading: *Making a Literary Life: Advice for Writers and Other Dreamers*, by Carolyn See (August 13, 2002)

23. (YPO) WHY POETRY

Matthew Zapruder, an award-winning poet and professor in the MFA program at Saint Mary's College of California, provides insight that leads his readers through many well-known poets and poems. As an astute teacher and writer, he reminds us to seek depth in words that shine forth, activate and light up understanding.

The goal is to enjoy the class and find the pleasure and understanding with the cogent and lively argument that poetry truly matters and is fueled by passion rather than pretense.

In a typical class meeting, two members would each choose a chapter from the book and send out to the class the discussion questions. For the presentation purposes, there would be two presenters; either one could select a poet or one or more poems for their presentation.

Common Reading: *Why Poetry*, by Matthew Zapruder (August 15, 2017)

24. (ZEN) ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE MAINTENANCE: AN INQUIRY INTO VALUES

It's about a motorcycle road trip from Minnesota to California on secondary highways. It's about a man trying to re-bond with his estranged 11-year-old son, who is riding on the back of his motorcycle. It's a mystery: who is Phaedrus? It arcs from a complete mental breakdown to competence and self-fulfillment, written by the man who traveled that road. It tries to bridge the gap between romanticism and technology. There's a section on Gumptionology which has people interested in making a college course of it. It's written in the form of a Chautauqua, an odd form of entertainment back in the day when speakers made tours into the heartland offering meaty subjects to think about. It's a cult book on the order of *Atlas Shrugged*. Robert Redford wanted to make a movie of it at one time.

Possible presentations:

- Socrates to the contrary, were the Sophists actually the good guys?
- An essay on the use of secondary highways for quality travel
- How do you reconcile Romanticism and Technology on philosophical and everyday levels?
- Your opinion of his use of non-graded papers in Rhetoric?
- What is Quality?
- An introductory lecture for Gumptionology 101A/B, w/syllabi
- Pirsig's use of "platforms"
- Electroshock therapy pros and cons and its status today
- Pirsig's son and later, daughter, and their eerie connection
- Pirsig's later work
- ZAMM forums on the web

Common Reading: *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry Into Values*, by Robert M. Pirsig (April 21, 2009)