

TOPICS OFFERED FOR SPRING 2018

*Classes start first week of January and end last week of April.
Holiday periods are adapted to by individual class voting.*

1. (ABE) THE POLITICAL GENIUS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Abraham Lincoln is widely acknowledged to be one of America's greatest Presidents, if not its greatest. He is credited with holding the Union together and leading the North to victory in the Civil War. Further, his actions and beliefs led to the emancipation of African-Americans from the bonds of slavery. President Barack Obama regularly cites Lincoln as his role model for the presidency.

In our common reading, the Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Team of Rivals*, historian Doris Kearns Goodwin doesn't just tell the story of Abraham Lincoln. The book profiles the entire team of personal and political competitors that Lincoln put together to lead the country through its greatest crisis. Goodwin makes the case for Lincoln's political genius by examining his relationships with three men he selected for his cabinet, all of whom were opponents for the Republican nomination in 1860: William H. Seward as Secretary of State, Salmon P. Chase as Secretary of the Treasury, and Edward Bates as Attorney General. He ultimately gained their admiration and respect as well. The story is all about how he soothed egos, turned rivals into allies, and dealt with many challenges to his leadership, all for the sake of the greater good. Had he not possessed the wisdom and confidence to select and work with the best people, Goodwin argues, he could not have led the nation through one of its darkest periods.

Although there will be many opportunities for further research into these prominent figures and their role in the momentous times of trying to preserve a more perfect American union, S/DG members are also encouraged to look beyond the book, which is lengthy and comprehensive, in selecting a presentation topic. Other suitable topics might include earlier periods of Lincoln's professional life, his personal life, events of the Civil War, or the words of any of his speeches, which were uniquely his own work and shed considerable light on his deepest thoughts.

Common Reading: *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* by Doris Kearns Goodwin (September 2006)

2. (AMR) THE MEN WHO LOST AMERICA

Does this sound familiar: a war where the military requires additional soldiers to win the war, where the military says that a political solution is needed--not a military solution, where the military is told that the population supports them and once professional troops arrive loyalists will join the military, where the military tells the political leaders that their view of the war does not conform to reality? Did you know that King George III thought the Stamp Act was an absurd law, that Americans asked him to reign in Parliament and that one proposed pre-revolution

solution was to create a new political structure that 150 years later would be instituted as the British Commonwealth? Welcome to the American Revolution as viewed from behind the scenes rather than through battles or standard history. Topics could be: the development of the British Prime Minister position (it was not as it is today causing problems), how the English viewed the colonials, more in-depth discussion on what caused the revolution, what issues are still being argued in America today, what effect the revolution had on the Caribbean and Canada and finally, could the British actually have won the revolution

Common Reading: The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire, by Andrew O'Shaughnessy (September 2014)

3. (APH) ASTROPHYSICS FOR PEOPLE IN A HURRY

This is a pocket-sized primer of our understanding of the universe. On "CBS This Morning", Neil deGrasse Tyson said, "I try to collect some of the most mind-blowing science, astrophysics, in this small volume...and I try to tie a bow on it at the end with a kind of multi-cosmic perspective." Tyson is the astrophysicist and director of New York's Hayden Planetarium. According to CBS the book offers a shortcut to scientific literacy; it has short chapters that explore cosmic questions.

Kirkus Reviews says, "America's most approachable astrophysicist distills the past, present, and (theoretical) future of the cosmos into a quick and thoroughly enjoyable read for a general audience," and concludes, that the book is "A sublime introduction to some of the most exciting ideas in astrophysics that will leave readers wanting more."

Since the book "tackles all the Big Ideas in modern astronomy: from the birth of the universe, through its evolution into the one we see today" (*NY Journal of Books*), it seems that ideas for presentations will not be a problem.

Common Reading: *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry*, by Neil deGrasse Tyson (May 2017)

4. (ART) THE CENTURY THAT CHANGED ART FOREVER

If asked our opinion of contemporary art, most of us would probably say we don't understand it, and we don't like it. We might even say it doesn't look like art—more like a few careless brush strokes or a paint-spattered drop-cloth.

The 20th century is the century that changed the term "art" forever. Art has been defined and redefined so many times over the last 100 years that it has gained entirely new social, political, and technological meanings. It ranges across the full spectrum of disciplines available, including still photography, video, audio and massive public displays that challenge our concept of art. cThis S/DG will cover the art periods of the 20th century as well as representative painters, sculptors and photographers who contributed their works. It will help you understand contemporary art and maybe even change your mind about its value.

Suggested presentation topics: biographies and art of selected artists; installation art; street art; video art; minimalist sculpture; land art; museums and galleries of contemporary art; how technology is changing art; how did 20th century art get so “weird”?

Common Reading: *Art of the 20th Century*, edited by Ingo F. Walther (December 2012)

5. (BAS) 100 YEARS OF THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES

The best American Short Stories is the longest - running best-selling series of short fiction in the country. Together, the stories and commentaries offer an extraordinary tour through a century of literature with "all its wildness of character and voice." There are 40 stories to choose from and these represent their eras that have stood the test of time. Examples: 1915-1920 - Edna Ferber, 1920-1930 - Ernest Hemingway, 1930-1940 - F. Scott Fitzgerald,.....1960-1970 - Joyce Carol Oates,.....2010-2015 - Nathan Englander.....just to mention of few. The author, Lorrie Moore, writes that the process of assembling these stories allowed her to look "thrillingly, not just at literary history, but at actual history - the cries and chattering, silences and descriptions of a nation in flux."

Common Reading: *100 years of the Best American Short Stories* - edited by Lorrie Moore and Heide Pitlor (October 2015)

6. (CSC) THE CHICKENSHIT CLUB

This is an account from a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist of corporate greed and impunity, and the reckless, often anemic response from the Department of Justice. Why were no bankers put in prison after the financial crisis of 2008? Why do CEOs seem to commit wrongdoing with impunity? *The Chickenshit Club*—an inside reference to prosecutors too scared of failure and too daunted by legal impediments to do their jobs—explains why. The book tells the story from a perspective inside the Department of Justice. The book begins in the 1970s, when the government pioneered the notion that top corporate executives, not just seedy crooks, could commit heinous crimes and go to prison. The book travels to trading desks on Wall Street, to corporate boardrooms and to the offices of prosecutors and F.B.I agents. This provides context for the evolution of the Justice Department’s approach to pursuing corporate criminals.

Presentations could address specific examples of nominal punishment, the organization of the Justice Department and key DOJ personnel.

Common Reading: *The Chickenshit Club: Why the Justice Department Fails to Prosecute Executives*, by Jesse Eisinger (July 2017)

7. (CYB) CYBER WARFARE AND WHAT WE NEED TO DO ABOUT IT

Although the U.S. pioneered the technology behind cyber warfare, outdated thinking, policies and strategies make us vulnerable to losing any cyber contest with hostile nations. Cyber warfare refers to hostile attempts by one nation to penetrate another's computers or networks. Cyber warriors can use programs to crash websites, spread disinformation, and disable vital computer systems and networks. Richard Clark, a former counter terrorism advisor to President George W. Bush, argues that more resources should be invested into warding off cyber-attacks. Though the government has set up protection for intelligence and military information, the private sector, including power supply distribution, financial transactions, transportation networks and medical records, remain vulnerable to disruption by hostile nations or terrorist organizations.

In this S/DG, we will examine cyber-attacks that have been launched in the past, and look at what needs to be done to avoid or mitigate them in the future. We will also watch the riveting documentary, *Zero Days*, which tells about the Stuxnet virus and alerts us to the dangers of "the next global war."

Consider the following subjects for presentations: historic disruptive cyber-attacks; industrial espionage by competing economies (China and Russia); need for international agreements about cyberspace behavior; cyber-havoc potential of ISIS, Russia and N. Korea; U.S. vulnerabilities including power, transportation, communication, financial and health-care systems, etc.

Possible Common Reading – The book will be chosen at the premeeting:

Cyber War: The Next Threat to National Security and What to Do About It, by Richard A. Clarke and Robert K. Knake (April 2012; 320 pages)

OR

Dark Territory, the Secret History of Cyber War, by Fred Kaplan (2016; 287 pages)

8. (DEC) GREAT DECISIONS - 2017

The *Great Decisions* briefing book features impartial, thought-provoking analyses on eight issues of concern to U.S. policymakers today. Each article is written by carefully selected experts, offers questions and tools for discussion, as well as policy options for U.S. officials. As the Foreign Policy Association (FPA) has done annually for over 50 years it encourages readers to consider and discuss these world issues. In addition to the annual briefing book *Great Decisions — 2017*, the FPA now publishes a DVD that presents background information on the issues from subject matter specialists.

In the study/discussion group, each issue will be introduced by watching the FPA's DVD ½ hour presentation of the topic to set-up the discussion sessions which will be structured one class per topic. Each topic will have one or more presenters leading the discussion. The pre-meeting will allow the group to set up a detailed agenda for discussions.

At the end of the trimester each Omnilorean may choose to complete the accompanying National Opinion Ballot that is compiled by the FPA and presented

to the U.S. Secretary of State, Congress and the White House at the end of the year.

- The Future of Europe
- Trade and Politics
- Conflict in the South China Sea
- Saudi Arabia in Transition
- U.S. Foreign Policy and Petroleum
- Latin America's Political Pendulum
- Prospects for Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Nuclear Security

Common Reading: *Great Decisions – 2017* is available from the FPA January 2, 2017

FPA Website: http://www.fpa.org/great_decisions

9. (FKN) THE POWER OF FAKE NEWS IN POLITICS

Behind most major political stories in the modern era, there is an agenda: an effort by opposition researchers, spin doctors, and outside interests to destroy an idea or a person. The tactic they use is the Smear. Every day, Americans are influenced by the Smear without knowing it. Paid forces cleverly shape virtually every image you come across. Maybe you read that Donald Trump is a racist misogynist, or saw someone on the news mocking the Bernie Sanders campaign. The trick of the Smear is that it is often based on some shred of truth, but these media-driven "hit pieces" are designed to obscure the truth. Success hinges on the Smear artist's ability to remain invisible—to make it seem as if their work is neither calculated nor scripted. It must appear to be precisely what it is not.

Veteran journalist and author of *The Smear*, Sharyl Attkisson, explains how the Smear takes shape and who its perpetrators are. She exposes the diabolical tactics of Smear artists, and their outrageous access to the biggest names in political media—operatives who are corrupting the political process and discouraging widespread citizen involvement in our democracy.

Most Americans know that something is deeply wrong with what is being presented on the nightly news. We don't know what is the truth or where to get it. We can't even discuss many topics for fear of being politically incorrect.

Possible presentation topics: The Media: Truth vs. Money; Scandal Mongers; Fake News and Your Vote; Russia and the 2016 Elections; "Smear" Images and Cartoons; Discerning Fact from Fiction; Why Do We Enjoy Smearing? (It would also be fun to dig up information about smear campaigns from the past—Thomas Jefferson, Obama and Lincoln's wife were among the many smear victims.)

Common Reading: *The Smear: How Shady Political Operatives and Fake News Control What You See, What You Think, and How You Vote*, by Sharyl Attkisson (June 2017)

10. (GTK) THE GATEKEEPERS

What do H.R. Haldeman, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, James A. Baker III, Leon Panetta, John Podesta and Rahm Emanuel have in common? They were all Gatekeepers; White House Chiefs of Staff, the job that is the second most important job in government and possibly the toughest.

Chris Whipple, an acclaimed documentary filmmaker, writer, journalist and speaker brought together the seventeen living chiefs and through extensive interviews reveals how the Chiefs of Staff define every presidency. In this intriguing book filled with shrewd analysis and never-before reported details Whipple describes the relationships between the Presidents (from Richard Nixon to Barack Obama) and their Chiefs of Staff. In a fast moving narrative with new information on the presidencies we gain a new perspective on recent history.

This S/DG will lend itself to presentations on the events and crises faced by our Presidents and their Chief of Staffs. From Nixon's Watergate to Carter's Iran hostages, Reagan's Iran –Contra Affair and Bush's Iraq War, presentation material abounds. Discussions should be lively.

Common Reading: The Gatekeepers; How the White House Chiefs of Staff Define Every Presidency, by Chris Whipple (April 2017)

11. (LAB) PANDORA'S LAB

What happens when ideas presented as science lead us in the wrong direction?

History is filled with brilliant ideas that gave rise to disaster, and the common reading explores some of the most fascinating—and significant—missteps: from opium's heyday as the pain reliever of choice to recognition of opioids as a major cause of death in the U.S.; from the rise of trans fats as the golden ingredient for tastier, cheaper food to the heart disease epidemic that followed; and from the cries to ban DDT for the sake of the environment to an epidemic-level rise in world malaria.

These are today's sins of science—as deplorable as mistaken past ideas about advocating racial purity or using lobotomies as a cure for mental illness. These unwitting errors add up to seven lessons that are both cautionary and profound, narrated by Dr. Paul A. Offit. Offit uses these lessons to investigate how we can separate good science from bad, using some of today's most controversial creations—e-cigarettes, GMOs, drug treatments for ADHD—as case studies. For every "Aha!" moment that should have been an "Oh no," this book is an engrossing account of how science has been misused disastrously—and how we can learn to use its power for good.

Presentations can focus on other controversial areas of science, such as climate change, vaccinations, and other nutritional recommendations (remember the movie *Sleeper*?) Should we trust the experts or consider the unintended consequences?

Common Reading: Pandora's Lab: Seven Stories of Science Gone Wrong, by Paul A. Offit, M.D. (April 2017)

12. (MTH) THE MOTH PRESENTS

Anyone who has listened to "The Moth Radio Hour" on NPR will be "drawn" to this class.

Our reading is a collection of the best stories told on The Moth's live stage - unforgettable true stories about risk, courage, and facing the unknown. Alongside familiar voices like Louis C.K., Tig Notaro, John Turturro, and Meg Wolitzer, readers will encounter: an astronomer gazing at the surface of Pluto for the first time, an Afghan refugee learning how much her father sacrificed to save their family, a hip-hop star coming to terms with being a "one-hit wonder," a young female spy risking everything as part of Churchill's "secret army" during World War II, and more.

The stories may be heartbreakingly sad, laugh-out-loud funny, momentous or tragic; but almost all will resonate or surprise. They are stories that attest to the startling varieties and travails of human experience, and the shared threads of love, loss, fear and kindness that connect us.

Each class member will present on one or more stories taken from the text.

Common Reading: The Moth Presents All These Wonders: True Stories About Facing the Unknown, by Catherine Burns (March 2017)

13. (MUS) MUSIC – LANGUAGE OF THE SPIRIT

Classical music seems to be heard less often today than even a few years ago. Perhaps this is due to the greater influences of more cultures from around the world in our modern world.

For many of us, Western, classical music holds special value. Yet, some colleges have deliberately excluded classical music from their studies, as insufficiently global in nature.

If you would like to explore some of the richness of our heritage, classical music is a great place to start.

This S/DG will explore the evolution of Western music and learn how pieces we now consider as standard were in fact considered revolutionary when introduced.

Common Reading: Language of the Spirit: An Introduction to Classical Music, by Jan Swafford (April 2017)

14. (ODY) THE NEW ODYSSEY

In the world of modern politics, there may be no issue more successfully weaponized than the challenge of refugees and immigration. It played a major role in America's presidential upset. It has cracked and may yet break the European Union. And it has become one of the defining issues in the greater Mediterranean

region, with tendrils reaching deeply into the Middle East and both West and East Africa.

Who are these refugees? What are the forces at play? This S/DG will use journalist Patrick Kingsley's current book, *The New Odyssey*, as a spring board to examine the refugee crisis. This is Kingsley's unparalleled account of who these voyagers are. It's about why they keep coming, and how they do it. It's about the smugglers who help them on their way, and the coastguards who rescue them at the other end, the volunteers that feed them, the hoteliers that house them, and the border guards trying to keep them out. Presentations will supplement these personal accounts by providing research into the overarching factors, the policies and economics that impact the situation.

Common Reading: *The New Odyssey: The Story of the Twenty-First-Century Refugee Crisis*, by Patrick Kingsley (January 2017)

15. (PAN) PANDEMIC

Scientists agree that a pathogen is likely to cause a global pandemic in the near future. But which one? And how?

According to Sonia Shah, author of *Pandemic, Tracking Contagions from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond*, 90% of epidemiologists expect that at least one of the more than 300 infectious diseases that has emerged or reemerged over the past 50 years will cause a deadly pandemic sometime in the next two generations.

Sonia Shah says we cannot know which pathogen will cause the next pandemic, but we can study how pathogens have caused previous pandemics to help make predictions about the future.

Her style of writing is to interweave history, original reportage and personal narrative as she explores the origins of contagions by tracing cholera, "one of history's most deadly and disruptive pandemic-causing pathogens," and then drawing parallels to the "new diseases that stalk humankind today."

Presentations could be on any of the known diseases (Ebola, SARS, H1N1, West Nile...) or about the reasons pandemics are becoming more likely (air travel, viruses crossing over from animals to humans...) or about research taking place, or something from history. The author also wrote a book on malaria (*Fever: How Malaria has Ruled Humankind for 500,000 Years*, 240 pages) and another (*The Body Hunters, Testing New Drugs on the World's Poorest Patients*, 178 pages), either of which would provide excellent presentation material.

Common Reading: *Pandemic: Tracking Contagions from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond*, by Sonia Shaw (February 2016)

16. (POE) POETRY OF THE U. S. POETS LAUREATE

Using an anthology developed in association with the Library of Congress, this class will explore the course of American verse over the last seventy-five years. (The post of Poet Laureate was established in 1937). The book contains excellent

and unusual examples of each poet's works prefaced by biographies that clothe each writer with a face and relevant history.

Class presentations may include the study of poets and poems which are some of the world's best-known, such as Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken", to the lesser known works of Gwendolyn Brooks and Stanley Kunitz.

Some presentations might provide historical contexts for chosen poems or explore the sometimes-uneasy relationship between politics and art. Best of all, together we will read and enjoy lots of poetry.

Common Reading: *The Poets Laureate Anthology*, edited and with introductions by Elizabeth Hun Schmidt (October 2010)

17. (SFI) THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION SHORT STORIES

The best anthology of the best science fiction writers ever known--Asimov, Bradbury, Heinlein, Clarke, Knight, Del Rey – and more! Twenty-six short stories to choose from, every one a gem.

The Science Fiction (SF) Hall of Fame series was established to recognize quality SF writing before the era of the HUGO and NEBULA awards. What a wonderful gift to the early SF pioneers who were shamefully treated by the mainstream of creative writers. Of course, SF writers themselves changed these negative impressions by the higher literary standards achieved in the 1950s and beyond by such writers as Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Roger Zelazny, Ursula Le Quin, Joanna Russ, Frank Herbert (I'm having fun proving my point with this list, which could go on and on . . .). This first volume is framed by two stories of a journey to Mars: "A Martian Odyssey" from 1934 (I wanted to make a movie version with Jack Nicholson as the hero) and "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" from 1963 (I wanted to make a movie version with Jack Nicholson as the hero). In those intervening 29 years SF writing matured from Stanley Weinbaum's rather primitive pulp fiction to Roger Zelazny's stunning modernist prose. The first story is just an action fantasy, with little science and the most rudimentary fiction techniques. Still it's a great read! It has action, humor, suspense and one of the great alien characters in the whole genre, the bird-like and noble-hearted Martian, named Tweel. Trust me: once you meet Tweel you will never forget it. The later distinction between Hard SF and Soft SF did not yet exist and I doubt it would have mattered to Weinbaum, who was not a professional writer. However, three decades later, we have a very professional, and polished writer in Roger Zelazny, who had internalized the main currents of modern literature as his references to Hart Crane, Rainer Maria Rilke, the Mahabharata, Shakespeare, Rimbaud attest. You get the point. For Zelazny, goddamit, SF is literature and occupies its own niche in world literature.

Common Reading: *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame; Volume 1: 1929-1964* edited by Robert Silverberg (January 2005)

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

The Omnilorean New Globe Players plan a fun January-April 2018 season — reading and studying three of Shakespeare's more popular plays. Did you know that of the 38 plays generally credited to the Bard, almost half (18) of them are Comedies? Maybe we'll read three comedies again, or maybe a great Tragedy play will be one of the three? With players standing and with a few props, we will do reading walk-throughs of the three plays to be chosen at the pre-meeting in December.

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/17c-SHK-Shakespeare> to view the Fall 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.

SHK will be limited to the first 24 enrollees and will not split.

Common Reading: Selected Plays

19. (SOU) DEEP SOUTH

From the book: Paul Theroux has spent the past fifty years roaming the globe, describing his encounters with remote people and far-flung places in ten best-selling travel books. Now, for the first time, he explores a part of America—the Deep South. Setting out on a winding road trip, Theroux discovers a region of architectural and artistic wonders, incomparable music, mouth-watering cuisine—and also some of the worst schools, medical care, housing, and unemployment rates in the nation.

On road trips the author visits gunshops and small-town churches, laborers in Arkansas, and parts of Mississippi where they still call the farm up the road "the plantation." He visits with the unsung heroes of the South—mayors, social workers, writers, reverends, the working poor--and with farming families. It is an ode to a region.

Come and visit (or return to) a part of America that many may not be familiar with. Meet and learn about the people.

Presentations could be about personal travels, stories in the news (e.g., the Confederate statues), or certain people or places. Or one could go further and examine why so little outside help is provided to this area of America, while so much is given in aid to other countries.

Common Reading: *Deep South: Four Seasons on Back Roads*, by Paul Theroux (September 2015)

20. **LIAR, TEMPTRESS, SOLDIER, SPY**

This S/DG would look at the Civil War in the United States from the perspective of four women from both sides of the war who risked everything to aid their cause. The author illuminates one of the little known aspects of the Civil War through the stories of a socialite, a farm girl, an abolitionist, and a widow who served as spies during the period of 1861-1865. The true adventures of these four heroines are presented with a cast of real-life characters including Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, General Stonewall Jackson, detective Allan Pinkerton, Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, and Emperor Napoleon III

This S/DG would use the common reading for discussions while supplementing it with related presentations to broaden the topic. Possible presentations could cover women's roles during the Civil War both on the home front and within the war; rights and standing of women in general in the 1860's versus current time; battle conditions; women in today's military and 'secret/spy' agencies; famous spies from other time periods; and how technology has changed spying.

Common Reading: *Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy: Four Women Undercover in the Civil War*, by Karen Abbott (September 2014)

21. **(SYR) A PERSONAL HISTORY OF SYRIA**

This book recounts the life of the author's grandmother in her apartment building in Damascus. Research for the book and the renovation of her apartment serves as a cover for the author, an American-born journalist, to return to Syria in 2011 at the start of the Syrian civil war. The book expands to the history of Syria from the end of World War I and the Ottoman Empire, Syria's class structure and many ethnic groups, its geography and cities. The author travels in Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, New York and Germany as she meets relatives and former neighbors to recapture her grandmother's story. Life under the Assads, the secret police, the outbreak of the civil war, how people cope, became refugees, and scatter abroad before and during the war all come to light.

Possible presentation topics are parts of the history of Syria, the civil war and its refugees, the ethnic groups of Syria, Syria's neighbors in the Middle East, notable people of Syrian descent, and even Syrian cuisine.

Common Reading: *The Home That Was Our Country – A Memoir of Syria*, by Alia Malek (February 2017)

22. (TOL) THE NEXUS OF TOLERANCE

From 786 to 1492, in Andalucía, Spain, three cultures--Judaic, Islamic, and Christian--forged a relatively stable (though occasionally contentious) coexistence. Such was this period that there remains in Toledo a church with an "homage to Arabic writing on its walls and a sumptuous 14th-century synagogue built to look like Granada's Alhambra."

The author of the suggested reading offers persuasive evidence that the Renaissance was strongly foreshadowed by the intellectual climate of Spain in the preceding centuries. The culture created was receptive to intellectual pursuits not allowed in the rest of Europe for several centuries. This environment was largely a result of the tolerance shown between Muslims, Christians, and Jews for their cultures. The S/DG will use the book as a discussion reference while considering the current world culture, events, and how much has changed.

Presentation topics might include: Geography and culture: Seville, Toledo, Cordova, Granada; Emperors, kings, rulers, fiefdoms, battles; Literature, poetry, song; Science, mathematics, libraries, architecture (Alhambra), philosophers; Lessons from the past; Recent events in the world; and Current contrary opinions to this peaceful period.

Common Reading: The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain, by Maria Rosa Menocal (April 2003)

23. (WID) A WORLD IN DISARRAY

Russia. Cyberwarfare. North Korea. Nuclear weapons. Afghanistan. Terrorism. It seems as if every day brings a new foreign policy challenge, and our heads can't stop spinning. Things fall apart; the center cannot hold. The rules, policies and institutions that have guided the world since World War II have largely run their course. Now, according to Richard Haass (President of the Council on Foreign Relations and former director of the Policy Planning Staff under General Colin Powell) we are living in "A World in Disarray," facing global challenges such as terrorism, the spread of nuclear weapons, climate change, cyberspace, and a return to great power rivalries. In our common reading, Haass describes these challenges in detail and offers a prescription for dealing with them, a so-called "updated global operating system" that takes into account today's reality of the wide dispersion of power and borders that count for less. And if that weren't enough, Haass also weighs in about what our own country must do to address its dysfunctional politics and the lack of agreement on the nature of our relationship with the rest of the world.

Any of the topics mentioned above are candidates for presentations, as well as other subjects such as Brexit, the rise of the populist right, and the war in Syria.

Common Reading: A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order, by Richard Haass (January 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)