

Oliver Wolcott Library Non-Fiction Book Group 2020-21

Meets the second Thursday of the month at 2 pm (860) 567-8030 www.owlibrary.org

New members welcome – join one or all discussions

October 8, 2020	Educated	Tara Westover
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Born to survivalists in Idaho, Tara Westover was 17 the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that no one ensured the children received an education, and no one intervened when one of Tara's older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara tried a new life. Her quest for knowledge took her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. *Moderated by Jeff*

November 12	Autobiography of a Face <i>in combination with</i> Truth & Beauty <i>Read either one or both</i>	Lucy Grealy and/or Ann Patchett
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Lucy Grealy was a writer with horrific facial deformities from cancer and surgeries as a child. Her honest *Autobiography of a Face* is so moving, but even more so when paired with Ann Patchett's biography of Lucy, her friend. In *Truth & Beauty*, the story isn't Lucy's life or Ann's life, but the parts of their lives they shared together. Both are terrific works individually, but also can spark a great discussion of autobiography versus biography. *Moderated by Nancy*

December 10	White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of our Racial Divide <i>Pair with Fiction: Kindred</i>	Carol Anderson
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Since 1865 and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, every time Blacks have made advances towards full participation in our democracy, white reaction has fueled a deliberate and relentless rollback of their gains. The Black Codes, Jim Crow, segregated white private schools, the Southern Strategy, the War on Drugs, and the reaction to Barack Obama's election all reflect the expression of white rage that has been as relentless as it has been brutal. *Moderated by Dick*

January 14, 2021	Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland	Patrick Radden Keefe
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The Troubles in Northern Ireland as seen through a family whose widowed mother of ten "disappeared" after a knock on the door late one night. With the pacing of a thriller, Keefe's exhaustive reportage brings home the terror, the waste, and the heartbreaking futility of a guerrilla war fought in peoples' homes as well as in the streets. *Moderated by Cindy*

February 11	An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States <i>Pair with Fiction: This Tender Land</i>	Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
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This history challenges the founding myth of the U.S. and shows how policy against the Indigenous peoples seized the territories of the original inhabitants, displacing or eliminating them. This policy was praised in popular culture and in the highest offices of government and the military. Spanning more than 400 years, this classic bottom-up peoples' history radically reframes U.S. history and explodes the silences that have haunted our national narrative. *Moderated by Frances*

March 11	The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America	Greg Grandin
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Ever since this nation's inception, the idea of an open frontier has been central to American identity. Symbolizing a future of endless promise, it was the foundation of the United States' belief in itself as an exceptional. Today, though, America has a new symbol: the border wall. A historian explores the meaning of the frontier throughout the full sweep of U.S. history – from the American Revolution to the War of 1898, the New Deal to the election of 2016. *Moderated by Jeff*

April 8	Mapping Human History: Discovering the Past Through our Genes	Steve Olson
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This narrative of the past 150,000 years draws on new understandings in genetics to reveal how the people of the world came to be. It describes the African origins of modern humans and the migration of our ancestors throughout the world. It shows how groups of people differ and yet are the same, exploding the myth that human races are a biological reality while demonstrating how the accidents of history have resulted in the rich diversity of people today. *Moderated by Diane*

May 13	How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy	Jenny Odell
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This critique of the forces vying for our attention re-defines what we think of as productivity, shows us a new way to connect with our environment and reveals all that we've been too distracted to see about ourselves and our world. When the technologies we use every day collapse our experiences into 24/7 availability, platforms for personal branding, and products to be monetized, nothing can be quite so radical as... doing nothing. *Moderated by Kathy*

June 10	Lost in America: A Journey with My Father	Sherwin Nuland
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This book about the mysteries of family centers on Nuland's portrait of his father, a Jewish garment worker who came to America in the early years of the last century but remained an eternal outsider. Awkward in speech and movement, broken by the premature deaths of a wife and child, he ruled his youngest son with rage, dependency, and helpless love that outlasted his death. The book also summons up the warmth and claustrophobia of a vanished immigrant New York. *Moderated by Valerie*

July 8	Brilliant Blunders from Darwin to Einstein: Colossal Mistakes by Great Scientists That Changed Our Understanding of Life and the Universe	Mario Livio
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We all make mistakes. Nobody's perfect. Not even some of the greatest geniuses in history, as told in this story of scientific error and breakthrough. Drawing on the lives of five renowned scientists, Mario Livio shows how even these geniuses made major mistakes and how their errors were an essential part of the process of achieving scientific breakthroughs. The scientific process advances through error. Mistakes are essential to progress. *Moderated by Margaret*

List as of September 10, 2020