

Oliver Wolcott Library Non-Fiction Book Group 2024-25

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

New members welcome – join one or all discussions

July 11, 2024	Bailout: An Inside Account of How Washington Abandoned Main Street While Rescuing Wall Street <i>Pair with Fiction</i>	Neil Barofsky
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The \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program bailouts in 2008 served Wall Street at the expense of the public. The book reveals how our political system is captive to Wall Street and why the too-big-to-fail banks are bigger and more dangerous in the wake of the crisis. The Dodd-Frank bill allowed banks to grow larger while retaining smaller capital cushions. *Moderated by Jeff*

August 8	The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State	Nadia Murad
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Nadia, who lived in a village in Northern Iraq, was 21 when Islamic State militants massacred her village. Nadia was forced to see her mother and brothers marched to their deaths. Nadia was traded from one soldier to another each night and raped. She managed, after many rapes, an escape through the streets of Mosul. It is a testament to the human will to live. We see both the horrors of war and the kindness of people. *Moderated by Jeff*

September 12	A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier	Ishmael Beah
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This is the way wars are fought now: by children (13 and younger) traumatized and wielding AK-47's. In 50+ conflicts worldwide there are 300,000+ child soldiers. What does war look like through the eyes of a child soldier? How does one become a soldier? How does one stop? Ishmael Beah, 26 years old when he wrote this in 2007, was at heart a gentle boy but at 13 he was in the government army and capable of horrible acts. How he learned to be a human being again gives us some hope. *Moderated by Dick*

October 10	The Order of Time	Carlo Rovelli
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Why do we remember the past and not the future? What does it mean for time to flow? Do we exist in time or does time exist in us? These questions about the nature of time continue to puzzle physicists and philosophers alike. We may think of time as uniform and universal, moving steadily from past to future, measured by clocks, but the author tears down these assumptions one by one, revealing a strange universe where at the most fundamental level time disappears. *Moderated by Tom*

November 14	Crying in H Mart	Michelle Zauner
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In this story of family, food, grief, and endurance, Michelle Zauner proves herself far more than a singer, songwriter, and guitarist. She tells of growing up as an Asian-American kid at her school; of struggling with her mother's expectations of her; of a painful adolescence. As an adult her Korean-ness began to feel more distant until her mother's illness forced a reckoning with her identity. *Moderated by Nancy*

December 12	Battle of Ink and Ice: A Sensational Story of News Barons, North Pole Explorers, and the Making of Modern Media	Darrell Hartman
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The title and subtitle tell it all. The book presents a frank portrayal of Arctic explorers, brave men who both inspired and deceived the public. It also sketches a vivid portrait of the newspapers that funded, promoted, narrated, and often distorted their exploits. *Moderated by Audrey*

January 9, 2025	Poverty, by America	Matthew Desmond
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In the U.S., one in eight children go without basic necessities, some citizens live and die on the streets, and some corporations pay poverty wages. The author, a sociologist, shows how affluent Americans knowingly and unknowingly keep poor people poor. This book gives us new ways of thinking about a morally urgent problem, calling on us all to become poverty abolitionists. *Moderated by Corinne*

February 13	Cultish: The Language of Fanaticism	Amanda Montell
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What makes “cults” so intriguing and frightening? What makes them powerful? Our culture tends to provide pretty flimsy answers to questions of cult influence. The author argues that the key to manufacturing intense ideology, community, and us versus them attitudes all comes down to language. Cultish language is something we hear – and are influenced by – every single day. *Moderated by Tricia*

March 13	The Best Minds: A Story of Friendship, Madness, and Good Intentions <i>Pair with Fiction</i>	Jonathan Rosen
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In New Rochelle in 1973, the author and his best friend were keen competitors while they succeeded academically. But at one point the friend suffered a psychotic break and entered a psychiatric hospital. Diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, he continued to pursue ambitious goals until a terrible event. The book is a heartbreaking account of good intentions and tragic outcomes. *Moderated by Margaret*

April 10	The Art Thief	Michael Finkel
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This true crime portrait of obsession and flawed genius describes a thief who never stole for money, keeping all his treasures in a single room where he could admire them. Athletic and able to circumvent security systems, he pulled off a number of audacious thefts. Yet these strange talents bred a growing disregard for risk and an addict’s need to score. *Moderated by Pat*

May 8	Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow <i>Pair with Fiction</i>	Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
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The abolition of slavery in the aftermath of the Civil War is a familiar story, as is the civil rights revolution. But if emancipation sparked "a new birth of freedom" in Lincoln's America, why was it necessary to march in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s America? This history moves from the Reconstruction Era to Jim Crow, through to World War I and the Harlem Renaissance. *Moderated by Ben*

June 12	The Great Escape: A True Story of Forced Labor and Immigrant Dreams in America	Sakit Soni
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Weaving a personal journey with a riveting tale of 21st century forced labor, the author delves into the lives of the immigrant workers relied on by the U.S. to rebuild after climate disasters. The book is the gripping story of one of the largest human trafficking cases in modern American history – and the workers’ heroic journey for justice despite the frustrations of immigration law. *Moderated by Cindy*

July 10, 2025	Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives	Siddharth Kara
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This book exposes the toll taken on the people and environment in the Congo by cobalt mining. Cobalt is an essential component to every lithium-ion rechargeable battery made today, the batteries that power our smartphones, tablets, laptops, and electric vehicles. Roughly 75% of the world’s supply of cobalt is mined in the Congo. *Moderated by Laura*
as of June 15, 2024