



A Word from...YOUR Library

Thanks to all of the faculty and staff who contributed to this issue of **Bookwatch!** Be sure to check in at the library for some great new books.

Congratulations to our winner of the Learned Owl gift certificate drawing... Jeannie Kidera

Have a wonderful Winter Break and read a good book!

Faculty and Staff Recommendations:

Jeff Namiotka recommends:

Black Ships by Jo Graham

"Graham's exquisite and bleak debut views the events of the ***Aeneid*** through the oracle Gull, a disciple of the Lady of the Dead." (***Publisher's Weekly***)

Lavinia by Ursula Le Guin

"In the ***Aeneid***, the only notable lines Virgil devotes to Aeneas' second wife, Lavinia, concern an omen: the day before Aeneas lands in Latinum, Lavinia's hair is veiled by a ghost fire, presaging war. Le Guin's masterful novel gives a voice to Lavinia, the daughter of King Latinus and Queen Amata, who rule Latinum in the era before the founding of Rome." (***Publisher's Weekly***)

The Historian by Elizabeth Kostova

"In 1972, a 16-year-old American living in Amsterdam finds a mysterious book in her diplomat father's library. The book is ancient, blank except for a sinister woodcut of a dragon and the word "Drakulya," but it's the letters tucked inside, dated 1930 and addressed to 'My dear and unfortunate successor,' that really pique her curiosity." (***Publisher's Weekly***)

Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell by Susanna Clarke

"The drawing room social comedies of early 19th-century Britain are infused with the powerful forces of English folklore and fantasy in this extraordinary novel of two magicians who attempt to restore English magic in the age of Napoleon." (***Publisher's Weekly***)

The Drama of Atheist Humanism by Henri De Lubac

"De Lubac traces the origin of 19th century attempts to construct a humanism apart from God, the sources of contemporary atheism which purports to have "moved beyond God." The three persons he focuses on are Feuerbach, who greatly influenced Marx; Nietzsche, who represents nihilism; and Comte, who is the father of all forms of positivism." (**Barnes & Noble**)

Dana Cunningham recommends:

Devil May Care by Sebastian Faulks

"The acclaimed author of ***Birdsong*** and ***Charlotte Gray*** writes a new James Bond novel in the spirit of Ian Fleming. A must read for Bond fans."

Faculty and Staff Recommendations continued:



Lisabeth Robinson recommends:

Animal Dreams by Barbara Kingsolver

"[This is] about the "prodigal daughter" returning to her small town home. Her 20+ years in the Arizona desert infuse her work and make her study of this environment, the community and family dynamics...rich and satisfying."

Rich Hoffman recommends:

Gertrude and Claudius by John Updike

"I'm thoroughly enjoying John Updike's ***Gertrude and Claudius***. Updike recreates the plotline leading up to the story we know as ***Hamlet***. While Gertrude and Claudius are seen as purely villainous in Shakespeare's play, in Updike's novel the reader sees an entirely different side of each character in his/her respective youth, which makes us think somewhat differently about how awful they are, once they take their respective places in the Bard's story."

Patty Campbell recommends:

A Mercy by Toni Morrison

"Set at the close of the 17th century, the book details America's untoward foundation: dominion over Native Americans, indentured workers, women and slaves." (***Publisher's Weekly***)

Terrie Wesley recommends:

Letters by Luanne Rice and Joseph Monninger

"...a quick, excellent, heart-warming read."

"...a powerfully moving novel of an estranged husband and wife through a series of searching, intimate letters." (Product description)



Jeannie Kidera recommends:

Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time by Eavan Boland

"Blending autobiography with argument, Boland, a well-known poet in Ireland, addresses the challenge of reconciling her identity as a woman and mother writing in suburbia with the male-oriented political tradition of Irish poetry." (***Library Journal***)

Dan Dyer recommends:

Child 44 by Tom Rob Smith

"...debut thriller about some child murders in the old Soviet Union."

Cheever: A Life by Blake Bailey

"...tells the story of the man whom many consider to be one of the greatest writers of short stories in American literary history. A good novelist, too (see below), but, as Bailey shows with compassion and erudition, a deeply troubled man whose demons pursued him to the end of his days."

The Wapshot Chronicle (1957) and ***The Wapshot Scandal*** (1964) by John Cheever

"...two episodic but very moving novels about some members of the Wapshot family in the fictional St. Botolphs, Mass., a small ocean-side community where the inner lives of the characters are as deep and occasionally turbulent as the nearby Atlantic. Funny at times-profoundly emotional at others."

Jill Evans recommends:

The Book Thief by Marcus Zusak

"I am sure that someone else has recommended this at some point, but I loved ***The Book Thief***." (Also recommended in the Fall Issue of ***Bookwatch*** by Patty Campbell.)

Non-Fiction Reviews :

Falling Leaves: The Memoir of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter by Adeline Yen Mah

This is an unforgettable account of family dynamics that I couldn't put down until the last sentence was digested with absolute wonder. Regrettably, it's amazing how thoughtless and cruel people can be to those they are supposed to support and love. It's a mirror of a family, dysfunctional and ... well, you just have to read it. Unpredictable and riveting this book deserves five stars in my opinion. *(Review by Sue Donnelly)*

The Infidel by Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Winner of the Anisfield-Wolf award, Hirsi Ali's autobiography chronicles growing up in a devout Muslim family in war-torn Somalia in the 70's and 80's. Ever since she was genitally excised at the age of five, Hirsi Ali began to question the treatment of women and children under Islam. At age twenty-one she fled from an arranged marriage and sought asylum in Holland, where she received refugee status which allowed her to pursue an education and to earn a living. As a Somali interpreter, Hirsi Ali learned that the mistreatment of Muslim women was a growing problem in Holland as well. After winning a seat in the Dutch Parliament, Hirsi Ali began to speak publicly about how she felt that the literal interpretation of the Qur'an mandates the submission of women and perpetuates a cycle of violence, ignorance and dependence on welfare. She later fled to the United States in 2005 after the threats on her life were deemed too serious for her to remain in Holland. She was named one of Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2005. *(Review by Paula Campanelli)*

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah

In the 1990's, a young boy loses his family and is recruited as a soldier in the brutal war going on in his homeland, Sierra Leone. Without shelter, food and clothing Ishmael commits terrible acts to survive. He does, however, miraculously survive and is a living testament to an unbelievable tale of the horrors of war and the arming of children. A beautifully written and heart-rending book. *(Review by Sue Donnelly)*

Pretty is What Changes: Impossible Choices, the Breast Cancer Gene and How I Defied My Destiny by Jessica Queller

Jessica Queller's mother died from ovarian cancer at age 58, after she had successfully "recovered" from breast cancer at age 52. After her mother's death, Jessica decided to get herself tested for the mutant breast cancer gene, BRAC-1. Her test is positive for the gene. This is the story of her journey through her mother's death and the choices she is faced with knowing that the mutant gene she carries almost guarantees that she will get breast cancer (82%) or ovarian cancer (42%). At times funny and, of course, sad, her message is powerful and important for anyone who has been affected by cancer. *(Review by Melissa Slager)*

True Enough: Learning to Live in a Post-Fact Society by Farhad Manjoo

Manjoo's book is in the vein of *Freakonomics* and *Tipping Point*, where the author wants to show us what is hiding in plain sight. As Manjoo says, "...sometimes getting more information about a controversy doesn't produce a better foothold on the facts--sometimes, strangely, more information actually pushes us deeper into the cocoon of our long-held views." He cites many instances of a single event that is seen entirely differently by opposing parties and uses psychological studies to explain the phenomenon. Much time is given to exploring how this phenomenon can cause/explain the biases so often talked about in today's society. *(Review by Tom Germain)*

The Aquariums of Pyongyang by Kang Chol-Hwan and Pierre Rigoulot

I was captivated by this fascinating book. I read it to gather some insight into one of the last cultural outposts totally closed off from the world that we know in the twenty-first century. Through the memories of someone who experienced personal struggle and suffering in this isolated land, I gained a little more understanding of this society and of the government that keeps its people in check--a rarity in many parts of the world, but still not unheard of today. *(Review by Sue Donnelly)*

Non-Fiction Reviews continued:

Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives by John Palfrey and Urs Gasser

Are you a Digital Native or Digital Immigrant? Digital Natives were born after 1980 and have grown up with computers. They live much of their lives online “without distinguishing between the online and the offline”. Digital Immigrants, on the other hand, learned how to e-mail and use social networks later in life. As Digital Immigrants, parents and educators need to improve their knowledge of digital technologies and understand the issues that face this generation of Digital Natives. These issues (privacy, safety, quality of information, piracy, and overload) are adeptly covered in this book and presented in an easy to understand manner.

This book is a must read for anyone who has an interest in the effects of the digital age on society and our future. *(Review by Kim Barsella)*



A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World by Tony Horwitz

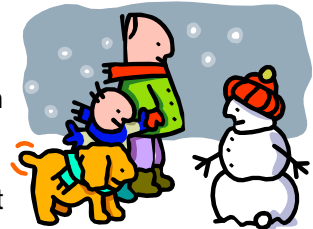


Author of the terrific ***Blue Latitudes: Boldly Going Where Captain Cook Has Gone Before***, Horwitz’s latest adventure is to travel the routes of the earliest European explorers in North America—and he uncovers a lot of startling facts as he researches and travels the routes of these early explorers. My hazy recollection and limited knowledge of the first European presence in North America, much like Horwitz’s, centered on Columbus’s “discovery” of the New World along with the English experience—Jamestown and Plymouth Rock—with a vague awareness of Viking, Spanish, and French visits. Horwitz significantly expanded my knowledge and understanding as he sheds light on the considerable exploration and impact on North America of these various European explorers. I guarantee you will learn a lot as you enjoy Horwitz’s insight and humor!! *(Review by Jacque Miller)*

Fiction Reviews:

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows

This sweet story of the residents of Guernsey Island, located in the English Channel, begins at the end of World War II. Occupied during the war by the Germans due to its proximity to France and England, the population remained totally isolated. Their story comes to light, however, when Juliet Ashton, a writer in London, is looking for ideas for her next book and is contacted by one of the islanders after he discovers her name in a book by his favorite author. They strike up a correspondence, and Juliet learns how the islanders survived the war with the help of each other and their literary society. Compelled by their stories, Juliet makes a trip to the island where her life is forever transformed by the members of the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. The novel is written in the form of correspondence, which is curiously compelling. *(Review by Melissa Slager)*



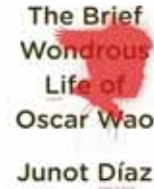
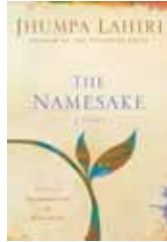
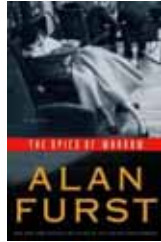
The Other by David Guterson

A chance meeting between two high school track athletes begins a lasting friendship that focuses on the philosophical answer to the question, “What does it mean to live a good life?” Both young men debate the question and their various answers endlessly as they spend time together hiking in the remote backwoods in the state of Washington. By the end of college the two have taken drastically different paths as they search the “good life”—but their bond continues even though their lives couldn’t be more different... *(Review by Jacque Miller)*

Fiction Reviews continued...

The Spies of Warsaw by Alan Furst

Col. Jean-François Mercier is a military attaché and spy stationed at the French embassy in Warsaw as Hitler rises to power and makes war preparations in 1937. The novel's plot centers on the espionage cat-and-mouse "games" in the Polish capital as all sides try to figure out where their best interests lie... Tension and suspense are expertly developed as are the characters in this entertaining historical spy thriller. *(Review by Jacque Miller)*



The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri

Gogol Ganguli is coming of age in the 80's in suburban Boston. He's torn between his American schooling and peers and his traditional Bengali home life. When he visits Calcutta with his family, he misses life as an American teenager and when he's home, he feels set apart by his name and family expectations. In a beautifully told story, the reader watches Gogol as he at once rejects and embraces his Indian heritage, food and customs. Outsiders and insiders alike will relate to Gogol's search for identity and love. *(Review by Paula Campanelli)*



Takeover by Lisa Black

Theresa MacLean is a forensic scientist for the Cleveland Police Department. While she is working at a gruesome murder scene, her police detective fiancé is taken hostage, along with six others, at the Federal Reserve Bank. When he is injured, Theresa convinces the bank robbers to allow her to trade places with him so he can be treated. Once she is inside the bank, the reader is hooked as the day long ordeal fills with surprises. Take some time to read this thriller! I was pleasantly surprised by Lisa Black's ability to tell a great story. *(Review by Jane Spencer)*

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Díaz

Junot Díaz' first novel, following his critically acclaimed story collection **Drown**, tells the story of Oscar, a lovable, overweight sci-fi fan who is impossibly nerdy and yet, who also impossibly dreams of finding love. Oscar and his family—his strong, willful, and driven sister, Lola, and his mother, the beautiful yet harsh Beli—are caught in the web of fukú, the ancient curse that has doomed his family for generations. In a narrative that weaves the history of the Dominican Republic with the very personal stories of individuals and an explosive, energetic language, Díaz asks whether the lives of those that came before us continue to control us in ways we cannot know and whether that legacy can be stopped. Winner of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize. *(Review by Cathy Fahey-Hunt)*

Looking for some more ideas? Check out the link to the New York Times 100 Notable Books of 2008.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/07/books/review/100Notable-t.html?_r=1

**"No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn."
Hal Borland**

