

Selections by Brain Books Group

Meets fourth Tuesday 2:30 pm on Zoom from Ashland Public Library

To get Zoom info, go to website for JCLS.org.

Click on "Calendar" or "Events" and go to the date of the meeting. Register to get Zoom info

Oct 26, 2021, 2:30-4:30 PM Zoom from Ashland Public Library Go to jcls.org

Think Again, by Adam Grant, 2021, 257 pages. This book focuses on how to rethink one's position on things or one's ideas. Good for Brain books as we keep trying to learn how to interrupt our system 1 and move to system 2. Concludes with strategies we can use.

Nov 23, 2021, 2:30-4:30 PM Zoom from Ashland Public Library Go to jcls.org
(Thanksgiving is Nov. 25)

The weirdest people in the world, by Joseph Henrich, 2020, 489 pages of text, \$18 to \$26. This book explores the psychological development of Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic (WEIRD) people/societies—in other words, us. Researchers like to point out that studies based only on samples from our culture are not representing all of humanity. Book also addresses how they/we became especially prosperous. He starts after about 1200 CE when Western Europe was a backwater. .

Dec 28, 2021, 2:30-4:30 PM Zoom from Ashland Public Library Go to jcls.org

Caste: The Origins of our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson (2020). Hailed as indelibly showing the harrowing awfulness of U. S. racism, making argument that it is better understood as caste system like India, with anecdotal evidence and analogies to Nazi Germany. The action desired is individual awakening of empathy. Displaces U.S. as a beacon of democracy. May be hard to look in the mirror again

January 25 , 2022 2:30-4:30 PM Zoom from Ashland Public Library Go to jcls.org

The Goodness Paradox: The Strange Relationship Between Virtue and Violence in Human Evolution by Richard Wrangham (2019). The paradox is that humans evolved to be cooperative, and are not much reactively violent, but also commit sometimes appalling deliberate violence against each other (only species that goes to war). How can this be explained? How does it apply to a society divided into parts that sometimes view each other as enemies? Self-domestication is a theme (like bonobos). \$17 or less used.

February 22, 2022, 2:30-4:30 PM Zoom from Ashland Public Library Go to jcls.org

How to be less Stupid about Race: On Racism, White Supremacy, and the Racial Divide by Crystal Fleming (2019). Includes discussion of "critical race theory," so much in the news these days, but it also is a guide to good practices and poor practices for those of us who want to do anti-racism. 256 pp. \$10 or used \$2.

March 22 , 2022, 2:30-4:30 PM Zoom from Ashland Public Library Go to jcls.org

The Upswing: How America came together a century ago and how we can do it again, 2020, by Robert D. Punam and Shaylyn R. Garrett, 341 pages of text, \$6-15. Uses data to show how the US improved in a number of measures (economics, politics, society, and culture) during the first half of the 20th century and then backslid from the 60's until now. The book ends with suggestions about how we might rekindle the strategies that worked in the first upswing in order to make another upswing possible.

April 26

The Triumph of Injustice: How the Rich Dodge Taxes and How to Make them Pay by Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Suzman (2019). Eschews anecdotes in favor of history and cutting-edge economic analysis. Jargon-free. The tax situation came from both deliberate choices and sins of indecision; capital owners are getting more exempt from taxes, and we have a tax avoidance industry. About 200 pages. A good follow-up to "Let Them Eat Tweets" if we are interested in how billionaires avoid taxes. \$5-11

May 2022 – to be determined. We will determine book for May, and probably beyond, at the December meeting (in order to meet Library publicity deadline for the spring months). To recommend books for this

group, send book info and why you think it's a good book to coyner@sou.edu. If you choose to purchase your books at Bloomsbury (at a substantial discount), our Brain Books group number is #106.

Selections by Jefferson Center Book Group

All are welcome to this book discussion as well as Brain Books

Meets third Tuesday 1-3 pm using Zoom at this time. Contact graf@sou.edu for Zoom info

Tuesday, October 19, 2021, at 1 pm via Zoom

The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good? By Michael Sandel (2020). The author is well-known and a much-awarded philosopher; we've read his work on "justice." Here he identifies and dissects how our culture uses concepts of "merit" and how these ideas lead us astray—to inequality, hubris, and sometimes despair, since the U.S. has very little social mobility and is obviously not meritocratic. Suggests re-thinking, to acknowledge luck, humility, solidarity, and dignity of work—for a much better society. About 230 pages. This book supports thinking about a better world.

November 16, 2021, at 1 pm via Zoom

The Other Slavery: The Undiscovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America by Andres Resendes (2016) 320 pp. Though little recognized, enslavement of Indians was actually widespread and serious in America, including the U.S. This book shatters many myths. It begins with mostly Spanish behavior to about the 1600s, then focuses on U.S. from pp 170-320. Chapters each focus on particular historical moments and locations to give depth needed to understand the phenomenon (in other words, this is not a survey or encyclopedic treatment). \$12

December 21, 2021, at 1 pm via Zoom

American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America by Collin Woodard (2011) about 325 pages. Rec. Ronnie. This book is better than I expected because the project is wide open to be just a rehearsal of stereotypes. This book is history (not social science, not data). It seems insightful, but it's not clear how much of its apparent brilliance is just anecdotes carefully [cherry]-picked. The idea that there are "eleven nations" is a weak claim, so lack of support is not so important. But this book's insights can promote and support understanding that (white) America is diverse, and provide some interesting historical linkages that seem to show why. \$6-14

January 18, 2022, at 1 pm via Zoom

Noise A Flaw in Human Judgment by Daniel Kahneman, Olivier Siboney, and Cass Sunstein (2021). Thorough analysis and many applications. Defines terms carefully and uses math. Links this work to other research. Noise is not the same as bias but both are harmful. Perfect noiselessness may not be good (eg "mercy" is good). Ending includes good "how to" tips. 464pp. \$14-19

February 15

To be determined. We will select books for February and beyond at the December meeting. Email your suggestions at least two weeks in advance—deadline is December 7, 2021.