

Selections by Brain Books Group

Meets fourth Tuesday 2:30 pm on Zoom .
For info email BrainBooksGroup@gmail.com

February 22, 2022, 2:30-4:30 PM

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 Register at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0pdOuprTqvGdYqpOBr19yNEngzDx6Y-LJX> You will receive confirmation and logon link. so watch for future notices.

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, 2022, 2:30-4:30 PM Zoom contact info is changing so watch for future notices.

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 24, 2022 – Zoom contact info is changing so watch for future notices.

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.

June 28, 2022- Zoom contact info is changing so watch for future notices.

First Principles: What America’s Founders Learned from the Greeks and Romans and How That Shaped Our Country. (2020) By Thomas E Ricks. Discusses how the classical education our first four Presidents received influenced the writing of the Constitution and the first years of government. Their education was very different from what we receive today. This book will shed some light on today’s controversy about the actual ideas and values of the founding fathers.

July 26, 2022 - Zoom contact info is changing so watch for future notices.

Rationality: What it is, Why it Seems Scarce, Why it Matters (2020) by Steven Pinker. How can a species that developed vaccines for Covid-19 in less than a year produce so much fake news, medical quackery, and conspiracy theorizing? Pinker rejects the cynical cliché that humans are simply irrational--cavemen out of time saddled with biases, fallacies, and illusions. Our thinking is actually sensible for low-tech contexts in which we spend most of our lives, but we fail to use the powerful tools of reasoning discovered over the millennia: logic, critical thinking, probability, correlation and causation. These tools are not a standard part of our education. Collective rationality depends on norms that are explicitly designed to promote objectivity and truth.

August 2022

to be determined. We will determine the book no later than June 28. To recommend books for this group, send book info and why you think it’s a good book to coyner@sou.edu, at least two weeks before the selection date. 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

March 15, at 1 pm via Zoom . Contact graf@sou.edu for Zoom info

Rationality: What it is, Why it Seems Scarce, Why it Matters (2020) by Steven Pinker.

In this book, Pinker supposedly rejects the cynical cliché that humans are simply irrational--cavemen out of time saddled with biases, fallacies, and illusions. Our thinking is actually sensible for low-tech contexts in which we spend most of our lives, but we fail to use the powerful tools of reasoning discovered over the millennia: logic, critical thinking, probability, correlation and causation. These tools are not a standard part of our education. Collective rationality depends on norms that are explicitly designed to promote objectivity and truth.

April 19, at 1 pm via Zoom . Contact graf@sou.edu for Zoom info

The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the new Chinese State by Elizabeth Economy (2018). This book covers many aspects of modern China.

May 17, at 1 pm via Zoom . Contact graf@sou.edu for Zoom info

The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story by Nikole Hannah-Jones et al (2021), 476 pages

This volume is an expansion of the groundbreaking NYTimes project that “reframed” our understanding of American history. The overall theme is that the inheritance of 1619 reaches into every part of America today, including a number of outside-the-box ideas. It is not a systematic history, but a collection of 19 essays, plus poetry, fiction, and photos.

June 21, at 1 pm via Zoom . Contact graf@sou.edu for Zoom info

The W.E.I.R.D.est people in the world, by Joseph Henrich, 2020, 489 pages of text.

This book explores the psychological development of Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic (WEIRD) people/societies—in other words, us. Studies based only on samples from our culture are not representing all of humanity. Book addresses how the WEIRD became especially prosperous, using evidence-based, preconception-challenging analysis. It starts from showing how the “West” (us) is psychologically different from the rest of the world and everybody’s predecessors, Henrich asks how that happened and so what?

July 19

To be determined. We will select books for this month and beyond two months before the selection date--by May 17 in this case. Email your suggestions at least two weeks in advance to coyner@sou.edu