Rudolph Almasy, Professor Emeritus, recommends:
Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood
by Trevor Noah
The autobiography of an exceptional individual born into the insanity of apartheid South Africa.

Amy Alvarez, Faculty, recommends:
Jaws of Life
by Laura Leigh Morris
By turns hilarious and soul-shattering, this present-day Appalachia.

2020 Book Recommendations List
Cari Carpenter, Faculty, recommends:
Professor Emeritus, Rudolph Almasy, recommends:
Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood
by Trevor Noah
A fabulous memoir by a Salish woman who was adopted before the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) came into existence, Harness is one of the many who experienced the trauma of being completely separated from her Indigenous family and community. Bitterroot is tremen- dously well written and captivating; a story of interpersonal adoption that sketches the challenges faced by so many Native Americans.

Patricia Bello, Parent of 2008 WVU alumni, recommends:
Marine Tigers: A NewyorRican Story
by José Bello
It begins on the colorful island of Puerto Rico and goes on to New York City, where his story of assimilation into American Life begins. A tale of personal and economic struggles and urban survival with a New York City backdrop.

Gwen Bargner, Faculty, recommends:
Sing, Untamed
by Jeymon Ward
Set in the Mississippi Delta in current times, Jeymon Ward’s singing, hard-talented voice is a moving change and unfurled resource extraction. Powers shows us all the danger of our growing dislocation from the natural world.

Barbara Brady, Faculty, recommends:
Washington Black
by Esi Edugyan
A beautifully written memoir on self-knowledge, body image, sex, rape, culture, and power.

Nancy Carnola, Faculty, recommends:
The Seven or Eight Deaths of Stella Fortuna
by Daniel Mendelsohn
Mendelsohn’s 81 year old father sits in on his freshman seminar on Homer’s Odyssey, with unexpected results.

Carl Carpenter, Faculty, recommends:
Bitterroot
by Susan Harris
Are you human? Have you sought and/or suffered from a lack of connection and intimacy? Do you want to know what happens at “cuddle parties”? If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions reading Amy Williams. Williams’ The Bite, The Breath and The Bliss. With a foreword by Northern Stories Suck Us In (McFarland 2018) will redeem your day. Laying bare her description of the ineffable effects of being separated and rejected, The Bite’s wide-ranging research and fast-breaking prose hold up a mirror for us to look into, if we dare.

Katie Fallon, Faculty, recommends:
Joyful Derangement of a Colored Man’s Love After Nature
by J. Drew Lanham
This beautiful book explores the intersections of nature, race, history, and family. Lanham, a birdwatcher and poet, looks at things in and about what it means to be an African American bird lover and nature lover in his native South Carolina.

Laura Farina, Faculty, recommends:
Refugee Tales
by David Herd (editor) and Anna Pincus (editor)
This collection of stories has admired au-thors like Ali Smith and Patricia Aboagbi rebel the experiences of migrants, detainees, and asylum seekers unable to speak freely for their humanity. The harrowing and deeply moving stories in this collection include the most moving and often laugh out loud series of tales. The characters in Refugee Tales are human, but also the reader on the heart-breaking, terrifying, and epic journey of Stella Fortuna in and from Calabria, Italy, to Hartford, Connecticut. O Magazine said, “Grames’ clear and compas-sionate voice lets the figures of her heritage move freely.”

Marilyn Francus, Faculty, recommends:
An Odyssey: A Father, A Son, and An Epic
by Daniel Mendelsohn
Mendelsohn’s 81 year old father sits in on his freshman seminar on Homer’s Odyssey, with unexpected results.

WVU English alum? We’d like to know what you’re up to! Send us a brief update for inclusion on our website and in future mailings. Please email Marsha Bissett: marsha.bissett@mail.wvu.edu.
Kirk Hazen, Faculty, recommends:

Rural Voices by Elizabeth Seale and Christine Mallinson (eds.)

The authors explore how people in rural areas around the world speak against the myths of rural backwardness. Looking at how language connects many social qualities, the authors explain how rural speakers develop their culture from their rich heritage of place.

Mountaineers Are Always Free by Rosemary Hathaway

Hathaway tackles the long and complicated history of “the Mountaineer” with deft prose and rock-solid research. For people who value freedom, the image of the Mountaineer is a symbol of America. But time and place have changed, and the book shows how this image developed over the last century.

Doug Phillips, Faculty, recommends:

The Design of Everyday Things by Don Norman

The book challenges you to pay attention to the little details of the world around you—from light switches to sliding doors—and to consider how design influences our interactions with objects and processes. Norman takes a deep dive into psychology and behavior that correlate to theories of rhetoric and language use. His work has played a significant role in the development of user experience design, a key area for professional and technical writers.

Mary Ann Samyn, Faculty, recommends:

Wild Things: The Joy of Reading Children’s Literature as an Adult by Bruce Handy

If, for whatever reason, you're still reading and thinking about Goodnight Moon and Peter Rabbit and Dr. Seuss and Little House, if you still love Garth Williams's illustrations, if you (like me) identify with Frances the badger, then this book is for you. Author Bruce Handy is a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair* and his prose has the flair you'd expect. A delightful book about books both delightful and dreadful in a good way... though if you're a fan of *Little Women*, be forewarned: Jo herself is praised as a “terrific character,” but the novel, says Handy, is “irritating.” Personally, I couldn’t agree more.

Nathalie Singh-Corcoran, Faculty, recommends:

Grief Cottage by Gail Goodwin

Grief Cottage features an orphaned child, an abandoned and dilapidated house, and a ghost. While the ingredients may make for a kind of gothic novel, it’s a quiet, contemplative, and beautifully written book.

Lynn Stahl, Staff Librarian, recommends:

The Golden State by Lydia Kiesling

The Golden State offers a feminist take on the road-trip novel, following the misadventures of a mother who abandons her university job and sets off for the California wilderness along with her toddler. Reading’s plot weaves together the chaos of the patriarchal movement, immigration-related bureaucracies, and the inevitable minutiae of single parenthood and a protagonist subject to the respective terrors of all three. The Golden State is alternately funny, poignant, nagging, and it is unerringly compelling.

Timothy Sweet, Faculty, recommends:

Future Home of the Living God by Louise Erdrich

From the author of one of the 20th century’s best novels, *Love Medicine* (1984), comes a new venture in a new genre, speculative fiction. Erdrich is still exploring the long aftermath of the conquest of America and the intertwined fates of indigenous peoples and European Americans. But she does so here in a near future in which, along with global warming, the pace of genetic mutation has increased exponentially and society is struggling to respond to this change. The novel isn’t perfect, but it may have found it in response to the 2016 elections—even if, it’s chilling and all too plausible rendered.

Glenn Taylor, Faculty, recommends:

The Trojan War Museum and other stories by Ayse Papatya Bucak

The stories in this collection are startling in their vision. They are feared dreams, and yet they are systematically crafted. They are zeroes, both new and ancient, the voices in each one as genuine as they are dangerous. It would be foolish to label this work as Turkish or American, French or Armenian, rooted or refuge—mythologically Greek or contemporarily Appalachian. This work is all of those things, and as its readers, we are too.