

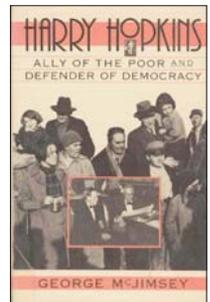
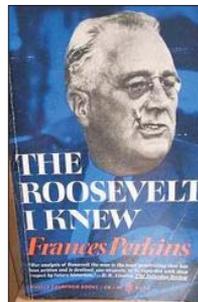
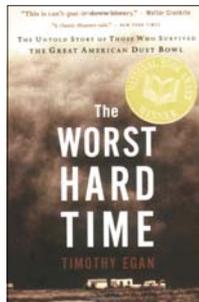
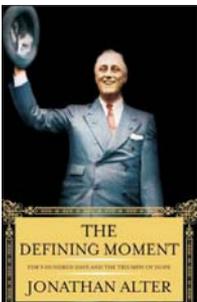
BOOK LIST

THE NEW DEAL

Richard P. Nathan



THE NELSON A.
ROCKEFELLER
INSTITUTE
OF GOVERNMENT



CONTENTS

Introduction on the New Deal	1
Excerpts from Introductions to Previous Book Lists . . .	25
Alphabetical Listing of Other Recommended Books . . .	43

INTRODUCTION ON THE NEW DEAL

Recently, I received an e-mail message from the Salvation Army in Seattle acknowledging an order of a used book I had purchased through Amazon. I am a fan of Amazon (their prices and services are good), especially for used books, which usually arrive in a timely fashion and in good condition. Another book on its way to me is from "GoodWillGetJobs." This is a welcome development. I have a solution now for kicking the habit of acquiring too many books. Mary Nathan's admonition: "You should get rid of a book every time you buy one." Now, I can. I will donate *my* used books back to the Salvation Army and other worthy nonprofit dealer-distributors and feel good in the process.

The book I ordered from Seattle is part of a collection I am assembling this year on the New Deal. The obvious reason: What can we learn from that experience that might be pertinent now?

Going back to the mid-seventies, I have compiled book lists. In recent years we published annual editions in pamphlet form. The themes have been related to work at the Rockefeller Institute of Government. I stopped doing this in 2005, but since then I keep getting requests for *the* new edition. So here it is.

Indeed, it often amuses me, and also disappoints me, that I get so much feedback for the book lists, appreciably more in comparison to most of my academic writing.

You should read regularly and critically, and you should rub the books you read up against each other. I began distributing my book lists when I taught at the Princeton Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. I would tell students, "You aren't educated when we finish with you. There are many great books you can read, often books that are so sprightly and fascinating that you can read them on a vacation at the beach." To emphasize the point, I would quote in my lecture the book I was reading at the time, selecting a passage that fit, at least reasonably well, with what I was covering. Students would roll their eyes and make faces to each other, so I stopped doing this. But I continued to compile the lists and to rub books together. It is even more essential to do

this in the information age. Fewer people read books (many of which are dumbed down to appeal to them); they don't read newspapers or magazines either.¹ They surf. They read blogs. They seek instant opinions they agree with. Not explanations — just the bottom line. Books stay with you. Good books ask you to think about something. Understand before you opine. I tend to favor long books because they stay with you longer and get you thinking more deeply. As stated, I like to group the books I am reading by a theme to compare different slants and perspectives. Past themes have been:

- **2005 – The American public service**
- **2004 – The history of the world's three major monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)**
- **2003 – The meaning of nonfiction and how to read nonfiction**
- **2002 – The culture wars in American higher education**
- **2001 – The post Civil War “Reconstruction” period in American history**

Now for the New Deal. I began with two new books purchased at Kramerbooks (in Washington) that cover the territory from left to right. The book I particularly like is the more liberal of the two, but I don't think that's the reason for my preference. It is crisply written and focuses on the life and role of five New Dealers — *NOTHING TO FEAR: FDR'S INNER CIRCLE AND THE HUNDRED DAYS THAT CREATED MODERN AMERICA* by Adam Cohen.² The conservative book in this twosome is *THE FORGOTTEN MAN: A NEW HISTORY OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION* by

1 Samuel Johnson in 1756 feared England was becoming a “nation of authors” in which “every man must be content to read his book to himself.” See Robert DeMaria Jr., *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

2 Adam Cohen, with his wife, Elizabeth Taylor, wrote another book in this book list, *AMERICAN PHARAOH: MAYOR RICHARD J. DALEY — HIS BATTLE FOR CHICAGO AND THE NATION* (see the later listing).

Amity Shlaes, which is also fast paced and full of good stories. This contrast between the conservative and liberal views is emblematic of the literature on the New Deal. There is, to this day, a deep divide about the New Deal and fundamentally the role of government in the national psyche. A back-and-forth/up-and-down schemata (it did this and failed to do that) is found in all ten of the books on the New Deal that I read, regardless of their point of view. (The ten books are listed at the end of this essay.)

Adam Cohen's book, published in 2009, highlights five New Dealers — Frances Perkins, Harry Hopkins, Henry Wallace, Raymond Moley, and Lewis Douglas — profiling each with emphasis on what they did with and for FDR. My favorites among them are Perkins and Hopkins.³

Economic conditions in the thirties were a lot worse than they are now. (It is spring 2009 as I write.) Unemployment was at some points three times as high. Government did less in 1933 when FDR first took office. One result is that state governments (a major focus of the work of the Rockefeller Institute) are harder hit now in terms of the budget pressures they face than they were seventy years ago.

FDR not only pitted his associates against each other, he pitted ideas against each other — often conflicting ideas. He pulled the rug out from under both his people and his policies, changing direction often. In this way and others, he stayed in charge, but one can question whether this is the best way to do so.

Here is a prime example of his changing direction. The second of the fifteen major laws passed in the first 100 days was the Economy Act to cut federal spending. It was enacted in March of 1933 under the fervent leadership of budget director Lewis Douglas (who didn't last long in the administration) and Bernard Baruch, who lobbied FDR for budget balancing. Although this first budget balancing spurt took place early on in 1933, there was another (and equally strong) in 1937.

In quick succession, the 100 days highlighted closing the banks (the Bank Holiday) and reopening them under a new law,

3 Here's a question to stump your friends: Which two Cabinet members served for the entire period of FDR's presidency? *Answer:* Perkins and Harold Ickes.

The New Deal — Laws Passed in the First 100 Days

1. March 9 — The Emergency Banking Act
2. March 20 — The Economy Act
3. March 31 — Establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps
4. April 19 — Abandonment of the gold standard
5. May 12 — The Federal Emergency Relief Act, setting up a national relief system
6. May 12 — The Agricultural Adjustment Act, establishing a national agricultural policy, with the Thomas amendment conferring on the president powers of monetary expansion
7. May 12 — The Emergency Farm Mortgage Act, providing for the refinancing of farm mortgages
8. May 18 — The Tennessee Valley Authority Act, providing for the unified development of the Tennessee Valley
9. May 27 — The Truth-in-Securities Act, requiring full disclosure in the issue of new securities
10. June 5 — The abrogation of the gold clause in public and private contracts
11. June 13 — The Home Owners' Loan Act, providing for the refinancing of home mortgages
12. June 16 — The National Industrial Recovery Act, providing both for a system of industrial self-government under federal supervision and for a \$3.3 billion public works program
13. June 16 — The Glass-Steagall Banking Act, divorcing commercial and investments banking and guaranteeing bank deposits
14. June 16 — The Farm Credit Act, providing for the reorganization of agricultural credit activities
15. June 16 — The Railroad Coordination Act, setting up a federal Coordinator of Transportation

From Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *THE COMING OF THE NEW DEAL (THE AGE OF ROOSEVELT VOLUME II, 1933-1935)* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), pp. 20-21.

but not nationalizing them; the Agricultural Adjustment Act (which introduced farm production quotas); the abrogation of the gold standard; the eventually overturned National Recovery Act (symbolized by the blue eagle), which introduced industrial policy and which big businesses loved; work relief and public works (the first run by Harry Hopkins, the second by Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, who were at each other's throats all the time); and labor law (initially Section 7a of the National Recovery Administration and later freestanding under the Wagner Act when the NRA was declared unconstitutional). However, by far, the most important legislative accomplishment of the New Deal was the Social Security Act, enacted well after the 100 days, in 1935.

Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins called the New Deal "inspired improvisation." She badgered FDR to stimulate consumption and help the poor. Perkins, as an avid pump primer, was a Keynesian even before John Maynard Keynes published *THE GENERAL THEORY OF EMPLOYMENT, INTEREST, AND MONEY*. She worked for FDR in New York when he was governor and throughout his presidency. Perkins began her memoir with this sure-fire observation: "Franklin Roosevelt was not a simple man." Perkins, the first woman cabinet member, set out a series of conditions about liberal causes she would advance before agreeing to serve in Washington. FDR, who treated her with a respectful bemusement, at the same time relied on her heavily and regularly. She had the strong lead on the Social Security Act.

The other favorite of mine among Adam Cohen's quintet of characters is Harry Hopkins. He didn't appear on the scene until day 79 of the New Deal, but from then on played a large role, both in the New Deal and in the war. *Time* magazine called him FDR's "friend, counselor, confidant.... Somewhere within the lean and hungry Hopkins frame, the burning Hopkins mind, the President found a quality and a kinship which he found in no other human being." According to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., FDR appreciated Hopkins for his "uncompromising loyalty." At one point, he reminisced about how associates during poker games would say things like — "By the way, Mr. President, you know thus and so is crazy, right?" But Hopkins never took advantage of his special relationship with the president. FDR told Stalin, referring to one of Hopkins' wartime assignments, you can speak to Harry as if you are talking directly to me.

Hopkins, born and raised in Iowa, came to the New Deal by way of his work as a social worker in New York City where he came to know both FDR and Eleanor Roosevelt. Once, when FDR got into a controversy in Georgia over work relief, he demonstrated his special relationship with Hopkins. FDR had composed an angry letter to Governor Eugene Talmadge responding to something the governor had said. But then he relented. On reflection, he didn't sign the letter. He had Hopkins sign it. When Hopkins became ill in the war years (FDR once described him as a "half-man" due to his physical maladies), he and his wife came to live in the White House. After the death of Louis McHenry Howe, Roosevelt's chief political aide, few people were closer to FDR than Hopkins, whom the president treated almost as a son. According to Robert Sherwood in *ROOSEVELT AND HOPKINS: AN INTIMATE HISTORY*, a book about the war years, FDR complained about how lonely it was to be president. "Everybody who walks through the door wants something out of you." Then he said, "You'll discover you need someone like Harry Hopkins who asks for nothing except to serve you." The best book (a nice find) that I read about Hopkins is a biography by George McJimsey, *HARRY HOPKINS: ALLY OF THE POOR AND DEFENDER OF DEMOCRACY*, a used book discarded by the Clark County, Nevada, Library. It is frequently quoted in many books about the New Deal. McJimsey was a professor of history at Iowa State University.

The title of the second of the two new books mentioned above, *THE FORGOTTEN MAN* by Amity Shlaes, has a double meaning. Roosevelt used this phrase often. He did so first in the April fireside chat delivered from Albany early in his 1932 presidential campaign, referring to "the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid." Shlaes, however, has a very different forgotten man in mind. Her "forgotten man" is the man who pays — defined in the following way by Yale professor William Graham Sumner in a quotation that appears as a front piece in the Shlaes book.

As soon as A observes something which seems to him to be wrong, from which X is suffering, A talks it over with B, and A and B then propose to get a law passed to remedy the evil and help X, or in the better case, what A, B, and C shall do for X... What I want to do is to look up C, I want to show you what manner of man he is. I call him the Forgotten Man. Perhaps the appellation is not strictly correct. He is the man who never is thought of....

He works, he votes, generally he prays — but he always pays.

Shlaes uses an incident at the very beginning of chapter 1 of her book to signal her frequent observation about the inconsistency of the fiscal policies and actions of the New Deal. She describes a thirteen-year-old boy from Brooklyn who hung himself as “he watched his family slide in an increasingly desperate situation.” After detailing the family plight, this punch line: “The story sounds familiar. It is something like the stories we hear of the Great Crash of 1929. But in fact these events took place in the *autumn of 1937.*” (*Emphasis added.*)

In her critique of FDR’s advocacy of governmental activism in the nation’s economy, Shlaes has similarly caustic things to say about interventionism under his predecessor, Herbert Hoover. The problem wasn’t just the New Deal. “From 1929 to 1940, from Hoover to Roosevelt, government intervention helped to make the Depression Great.” Shlaes’ hero is Calvin Coolidge. He had “strength of character,” she says, and he had his own Hippocratic Oath. “By holding back, Coolidge believed, he sustained stability so that citizens knew what to expect from their government. If things were going well, he adhered to a stricter version of his rule; change less ... [his] personal wager about the 1920s was that the private sector would and should take the lead and then the possibilities for progress would be boundless.”

Hoover, Shlaes says, did his damage on three fronts — “by intervening in business; by signing into law a destructive tariff; and by assailing the stock market.”⁴ Under FDR, although the Smoot-Hawley tariff was repealed, when it came to intervening in business and assailing the stock market (captains of industry as well) he outdid his predecessor.

4 Adam Cohen is equally harsh, castigating the “protectionist” Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which he says 1,000 economists wrote a letter to Hoover urging him not to sign it. It is interesting to think about 1,000 prominent economists in 1930. Speaking about farmers, Cohen says FDR’s Agriculture Secretary Henry Wallace called the law “iniquitous” because it “set off a round of retaliatory tariffs that Wallace and others had feared, cutting into the export market for American farm products,” which at the time occupied as much as a quarter of the nation’s labor force.

Shlaes' book is longer and in some ways richer and more fun to read than Cohen's. I agree with Peggy Noonan. She calls the Shlaes book, "An epic and whole original retelling of a dramatic and crucial era. There are many sides to the 1930s' story, and this is one that has been largely lost to history, and thanks to Amity Shlaes, now is refound." This book adds leavening to the New Deal literature.

A third new book I recommend about the 1930s is Timothy Egan's book, *THE WORST HARD TIME: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THOSE WHO SURVIVED THE GREAT AMERICAN DUST BOWL*. Unlike the Cohen and Shlaes books, it is not about Washington. It is "[t]he untold story of those who survived the Great American Dust Bowl." John Steinbeck, notes Egan, wrote in *THE GRAPES OF WRATH* about exiles from eastern Oklahoma and Arkansas. However, the heart of the area of the "black blizzards" of the Dust Bowl was further west in a "No Man's Land" of 100 million acres, the center of

which is the far western section of the Oklahoma panhandle.

The height of the "worst hard time" of the black dust was the summer of 1935. Egan tells the story of people whose lives and livelihoods were destroyed, not in the words and deeds of leaders, but in their family sagas. He used newspaper articles, diaries, and visited what was left of once-thriving farming centers on the map (some of which had small museums of memorabilia) and interviewed survivors,



the last of whom, Hazel Lucas Shaw, died in 2003 at the age of 99. (Fittingly, Hazel Shaw and her husband ran a funeral business in Boise City, Oklahoma.) Overall, says Egan, "Tariffs rose, banks simply closed their doors (the accounts of customers leveraged into oblivion), and land plowed up recklessly turned to dust." Egan's story, in short, is about the indomitable spirit of ordinary people. Hugh Bennett, a "doctor of dirt," who at one point in his life worked on a government soil survey, said, "What people were doing was not just a crime against nature.... America had become a force of awful geology, changing the face of the earth."

Egan intersperses his stories with comments on what was happening in the New Deal. Referring to both the Dust Bowl and the nation's financial system, he said, "on the giddy ride up, there had been no cop to enforce basic rules of an American economy that had become the world's biggest casino." Sound familiar? In the final analysis, says Egan, the fault was man's.

On July 11, 1938, President Roosevelt visited the biggest city in the Dust Bowl region, Amarillo, Texas. "Standing on his heavy metal braces to keep his knees in place," FDR talked about "the great American desert" and what the government would do to try to help the people who turned out in vast number to cheer him, some of them traveling for days to do so. And as fate would have it, in the midst of FDR's visit — rain — a torrential downpour. Riding in an open car to the park where he spoke, Roosevelt, said Egan, "was hatless, and water splattered off his glasses and ran down his nose, but he kept his political face forward, jaw out smiling and waving." Reiterating his theme, Egan interprets: "People had killed this land by their own greed and stupidity — and, yes, hubris and it could not be restored." But then the author says, "If Roosevelt believed this, he never let on."

The most unabashedly pro-FDR account of the New Deal I read is by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *THE COMING OF THE NEW DEAL*, published in 1958. Later, in his autobiography, *A LIFE IN THE 20TH CENTURY: INNOCENT BEGINNINGS, 1917-1950*, which was published four years before he died in 2003, Schlesinger makes no bones about his view of the New Deal. "I remain to this day a New Dealer, unreconstructed and unrepentant." In the same year, 2003, in the prologue to his book on the New Deal,

Schlesinger called Roosevelt's program "opportunistic and incoherent," yet "there lay behind the New Deal the penchant for experimentation and a unifying spirit." Schlesinger notes, too, that controversy continues to this day about whether the New Deal was a good deal.

Scholars on the right deplored the New Deal's disorderly quality, its demagoguery against the rich, and its penchant for affirmative government. Scholars on the left deplore its failure to seize advantage of the economic collapse to try more radical steps — to nationalize the banking system, for example, and to undertake other basic changes in the power structure.

He believed "most scholars regard the New Deal, despite its hit-and-miss qualities, as a constructive adaptation to the requirements of modern industrial society and a successful humanization of capitalism." And his punch line: "The New Deal demonstrates that there is indeed a third way."⁵

Like the Schlesinger book, though more guarded, David M. Kennedy's monumental *FREEDOM FROM FEAR: THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IN DEPRESSION AND WAR, 1929-1945*, says there were fits and starts. To Kennedy, the single word that describes what the New Deal accomplished is "security." It provided security for the downtrodden, for farmers, unions, and businesses.

Writing at the turn of the twenty-first century, David Kennedy summed up by saying the New Deal changed the role of government for the generation after the War, providing a framework that "must figure largely in any comprehensive explanation of the performance of the American economy in the postwar quarter century." Kennedy's treatment of the Social Security Act and the economics of the Act is clearer than Schlesinger's, though Schlesinger knew many of the people he wrote about personally, which gives his account a special vibrancy.

5 Schlesinger quotes John Maynard Keynes as his authority. In a letter he wrote to FDR, he said: "You have made yourself the trustee for those in every country who seek to mend the evils of our condition by reasoned experiment within the framework of the existing social system."

Conceptually, Kennedy stressed that FDR clung to his strong federalism ideas for Social Security, which were different from those of Frances Perkins and other of his advisors at this historic moment. For example, on the question of whether unemployment insurance should be a national system or a composite of state systems, Roosevelt took a staunch decentralist stand: "Oh no," he is quoted as saying, "we've got to leave all that to the states.... Just think what would happen if all the power was concentrated here, and Huey Long became president!" Perkins later said that (although reluctantly) she agreed with FDR, reasoning that if the Supreme Court "should declare the federal aspects of the law to be unconstitutional, at least the state laws would remain."

Another new book on FDR, Jonathan Alter's *THE DEFINING MOMENT: FDR'S HUNDRED DAYS AND THE TRIUMPH OF HOPE*, presents an "in-between" interpretation. That is, in between Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Amity Shlaes. An editor at *Newsweek*, Alter is a good read. Although it is titled to feature the hundred days, about half this fast-paced book presents an account of FDR's origins and early life up to and including the story of the 1933 Chicago Democratic convention, a squeaker, in which FDR beat Al Smith, who hated FDR; U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Garner (who became FDR's running mate); Maryland Governor Albert Ritchie; and California Senator William Gibbs McAdoo, who was the swing candidate, ultimately supporting Roosevelt and enabling him to win the nomination on the fourth ballot.

According to Jonathan Alter, most of the laws passed in the 100 days didn't persevere, created agencies that didn't last, were inconsistent, and failed to end the Great Depression. Reflecting Shlaes' view, he says there was "continuity with the Hoover administration." Nevertheless, says Alter, the New Deal provided "a psychological jolt that helped convince people not to give up on the democratic system." Coming from a journalist, Alter's description of Steve Early's role (FDR's press secretary throughout his presidency) and the president's adroit use of his fireside chats and regular and frequent press conferences stands out.

It is notable how many of the books on this list were written by authors who at the same time had busy lives as active journalists.

Besides Alter, this is true of Shlaes (a widely syndicated columnist), Adam Cohen (an editor at *The New York Times*), and Timothy Egan (a reporter for *The New York Times*).

With the exception of Shlaes' book, which is longer and more detailed, the other three books in this group are about the same length and treat their subject at about the same level. In each case, I should add that they do so with style. The Schlesinger and Kennedy books are older books by historians; both are long and treat their subjects in depth. Among the six books, it is hard to recommend which ones you should read. Ultimately, I'd go with Cohen, Shlaes, and David Kennedy. (The Kennedy book, the longest of the three at over 900 pages, also covers the War years.)

Six-plus decades after Roosevelt's death, the American people still are conflicted about the New Deal. It is hard to change domestic policies. In my view, it is harder now than ever. Our crowded, often gridlocked, contentious political system is characterized by bigger, stronger, richer, and more forceful interests than in the 1930s.

I worked for Nelson A. Rockefeller in the mid-1960s coordinating campaign research on domestic issues for his 1964 and 1968 presidential campaigns. What I recall most about public administration then is that there was a "Can-Do" spirit, befitting the ebullience and personal style of Rockefeller, who, indeed, was a "Can-Do" person. My job was to recruit the best experts in the country as advisors to Rockefeller on issues he wanted to tackle.

For the past twenty years, I have had the honor of heading the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, the public policy research arm of the State University of New York (SUNY), a system of 64 campuses that Nelson Rockefeller did much to expand, one of the signature accomplishments of the 15 years he served as governor of New York. SUNY is the largest comprehensive system of higher education in the nation with over 80,000 faculty and staff. It enrolls more than 400,000 students from every New York county, all fifty states, and more than 160 foreign countries.

Befitting our namesake, the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government's mission is to work with experts on American domestic public affairs to conduct research (in many cases field net-

work evaluation studies of the management and finances of U.S. state and local governments). Our role is not to make policy proposals, but to build knowledge bases to enhance the capacity of American states and localities and the myriad nonprofit organizations with which they contract to carry out domestic public purposes. Much of our work deals with state and local government issues and finances in New York State.

To me, what is striking today about public administration is that we can no longer rely unreservedly on the “Can-Do” approach. Add one letter — “r.” We need a “candor” approach to public administration. Economist Mancur Olson made a telling observation that accentuates this point. As democratic political systems mature, said Olson, the strongest vested interests become increasingly entrenched. I quote:

- Stable societies with unchanged boundaries tend to accumulate more collusions and organizations for collective action over time.
- Members of “small” groups have disproportionate organizational power for collective action, and this disproportion diminishes but does not disappear over time.
- On balance, special-interest organizations and collusions reduce efficiency and aggregate income in the societies in which they operate and make political life more divisive.⁶

Olson, who died in 1998, ended his best known book, *THE RISE AND DECLINE OF NATIONS: ECONOMIC GROWTH, STAGFLATION, AND SOCIAL RIGIDITIES*, with this hoped-for “happy ending.”

May we not then reasonably expect, if special interests are (as I have claimed) harmful to economic growth, full employment, coherent government, equal opportunity, and social mobility, that students of the matter will become in-

6 Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 74.

creasingly aware of this as time goes on? And that the awareness eventually will spread to larger and larger proportions of the population? And that this wider awareness will greatly limit the losses from the special interests? This is what I expect, at least when I am searching for a happy ending.⁷

Happy ending indeed! But can we achieve it?

I do not cite Olson to be pejorative. Interest groups should be heard. Still, there is no more dramatic proof of Olson's theory than the prolonged struggle over health-care reform. A wide array of political interests in the health-care industry have dug in their heels for a long time, using their full lobbying and campaign-finance muscle to prevent reforms that would disadvantage them. Reforms of the kind they have resisted go to the heart of the challenge now of containing the cost of health care.

The American political system is inherently change-resistant. It was built that way. This has helped to make our democratic form stable; we have the longest surviving written constitution in the world. One byproduct for leaders who seek to be change agents is that the necessary bargaining and coalition-building processes often absorb incredible amounts of resources.

The New Deal focused mostly on the little people, originating much of what today we call "the safety net," which includes public programs like Social Security, unemployment insurance, aid for the disabled, welfare and work facilitation programs, worker protections, and later (after FDR) Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid. Roosevelt wanted to include health care in the Social Security Act, but decided not to do so because of opposition from the American Medical Association. The act did include several low-budget grant-in-aid programs for public health.

Fast-forward to the recently enacted bailouts of the nation's current economic crisis. They are huge and focus a lot more than the New Deal on big people — banks, financial investment companies, insurance companies, automobile manufacturers — in an effort to avert the meltdown of our financial system. In adjusted dollar terms, the bailout of the financial system and that of the pub-

7 Ibid, p. 237.

lic sector operating heavily through state and local governments exceeds spending levels of the New Deal. And yet, there is the question — Will the nation's leaders be able to reset the U.S. economy on a strong and upward course? Will the ambitious reform agenda advanced in 2009 come to pass in full or in part?

My reading is that the answer to these questions is more than anything else a function of what happens to health policy. The 1,073-page, \$787 billion stimulus law enacted in February contained a little-noticed provision that foretells this problem. It provided \$1.1 billion for the federal government to study and compare the effectiveness of different treatments for the same illness. Even this foot-in-the-door effort to sort out and rate medical treatments engendered hot criticism when it was discovered. A conservative analyst described it as enabling bureaucrats to “monitor treatments to make sure your doctor is doing what the federal government deems appropriate and cost effective.” Shades of “Harry and Louise.” A Republican Congressman predicted that “federal bureaucrats will misuse this research to ration care, to deny life-saving treatments to seniors and disabled people.” Robert Pear in *The New York Times* interpreted this provision as reflecting a theme of the book published in 2008 by Tom Daschle, who had been slated to be the secretary of Health and Human Services and White House health czar in the Obama administration. Daschle's book, *CRITICAL: WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT THE HEALTH-CARE CRISIS*, calls for creating an independent agency, a “Federal Health Board” like the Federal Reserve, which, he says (although one can surely question this judgment) “has skillfully managed monetary policy for decades while earning a reputation for political independence.”

This will be the great debate, not necessarily in this form, but in some form — how to control health-care costs. The challenge of broadening health-care coverage has deep roots in U.S. history going back to Theodore Roosevelt, and on to Presidents Truman, Nixon, Ford, and Clinton and many governors (Earl Warren of California among them) and members of the Congress. This debate will be a bigger challenge to the American political system than any other. Seventy years ago FDR, with all of his genius as a leader and communicator, decided not to take on this “third-rail” issue (expanding health care) in the Social Security Act.

This observation tells a lot about the policy making style of FDR. No matter what you think of the New Deal, and it still elicits passionate argument, FDR had a high order of political acumen that during his lifetime was often underestimated. He played people and issues like a concert violinist. Had he pushed more consistently for governmental innovation and specifically for new and expanded health-care benefits, things might be different now.

Policy making seemed something of a game to FDR. Despite the constant disagreement and din of debate, associates commented on his composure. FDR himself is quoted saying, "I lay down at night and put my head on my pillow, think about the day and that I have done my best, and then I turn over and go to sleep."

He could be mischievous. To show his mischievous side, in a widely cited incident tweaking outgoing President Hoover (they disliked each other), Roosevelt told Hoover he would forego the tradition of the new president visiting the former chief after the inauguration. Hoover responded that there is no such tradition. He said the president never visits anyone; people come to him. To tease Hoover further, a short while after he was inaugurated, FDR paid a personal visit to the home of aging Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. The visit is well known because it is on this occasion after Roosevelt left that Holmes described FDR as "a second class intellect with a first class temperament." I wonder about his intellect being second class. It seems to me it was first class. As an example, without FDR's surely "intellectual" views reflected in decisions on major conceptual issues that came up in drafting the Social Security Act, it is doubtful the law would have been enacted.

Putting together the two points just made about the system and essential qualities of political leadership sets the table for the final subject of this essay. Both the U.S. fiscal and the political systems are dramatically tougher to manage in the Internet age. Government is much bigger. The country is wealthier. Stakeholders have more at stake and correspondingly more to stake on their lobbying. In cyberspace, anybody can play in the great game of free government, and a great many people do.

Successful as our constitutional structure has been for more than 200 years, I believe the high power and vast wealth that now

go into playing the game of American politics require fundamental institutional reform. Often advocated by “good government groups” (also called “goo-goos”), governmental reforms are frequently treated as being altogether dull, and correspondingly elicit a “mego” response (my eyes glaze over). They may cause a spate of media coverage when they are announced, but they are soon relegated to a back burner. This needs to change. We are losing too much power and influence in the world to be able to continue to afford the luxury of our often gridlocked and nearly always long and drawn-out political decision making processes. We should keep the baby but change the bath water.

This is the primary lesson of my survey of books on the New Deal. The New Deal was not bold enough or consistent fiscally, but it was often brilliantly creative institutionally. In the current moment, the new administration seems willing to be bold fiscally, but it has not so far given as much attention or demonstrated as strong a commitment to institutional reform. Here’s a partial list of New Deal institutional reforms: the creation of agencies to run work relief (the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps); the Securities and Exchange Commission; Social Security’s “contributory” trust fund; the Tennessee Valley Authority; the National Recovery Act (even though it was thrown out in court); the labor provisions of that act, which created the National Labor Relations Board; and also extensive regulatory reforms, for example, of banking and to set fair labor standards. There was in addition a major overhaul and strengthening of the Executive Office of the president.

In our time big issues in American government tend to be treated in two ways, rather than as needed in three ways. The two ways are *politically* (Who did what to whom? Who won? Who lost?) and *substantively* (What goals should be achieved?). What is missing is that major issues are rarely viewed and treated *institutionally*. We resist facing up to Mancur Olson’s challenge — the need to take on entrenched interests that are increasingly well protected and prevent changes from being adopted, or if they are adopted, impede their implementation.

The pluralism of the American governmental “system” has been an asset. But it has been built up in a way and to a degree that

doesn't suit the times. We need to pay a lot more attention to how things get done and whether they get done. Implementation is the short suit of American government. We promise a full moon but often deliver a thin crescent. This tendency to set ambitious goals and hope they will be fulfilled can be a serious problem when goals aren't fulfilled. Leaders in myriad ways and at many levels in American government say they are trying to fix the machinery; the problem is they often do a poor job of doing so.

Decision making processes in Washington and state capitals and city halls are frenetic and dominated by horse trading. You get yours and I get mine. The budget be damned. Tackle one issue and go on to the next. There is little time, patience, and capability for asking follow-up questions: Can the job get done? Did the job get done? If you ask why are we falling short, the answer often given is, "We're working on this; check with us later."

Institutional ox-goring is not easy. Taking on members of Congress (their committees and their staff), small and outdated local governments, public agencies with out-of-date missions, corporations and unions that have cherished internal governmental access and power — all send cold chills down the spine of leaders of America's governments.

Two functional areas of government — health and education — account for half of all domestic public spending. Both are in trouble. We can no longer tolerate out-of-control health-care cost inflation. It is killing us. We can no longer tolerate having America's schools fall below international standards. The problem, yes, is money, but it is also a problem of political will and the capability to translate good intentions into good results.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, which classifies and counts the nation's governments, there are 87,528 state and local governments in the United States. Their combined spending accounts for one-fifth of the nation's economy. Total direct state and local spending in 2001 for the first time exceeded that of the federal government.

Political scientist Hugh Heclo says Americans as a people "are disposed to distrust institutions." This is not a new condition.

Political institutions are a prominent example of this distrust, but, according to Heclo, it is not confined to government.

In recent decades a similar current of distrust marks people's reaction to most of the other major institutions in modern society. This includes business, unions, public schools, organized medicine, the legal profession, religious institutions, journalism, non-profit organizations. With a few exceptions, growing distrust in the modern mind is directly toward the entire institutional apparatus of modern society. If we imagine that apparatus as a sort of bank, the overall picture is one of many withdrawals, few deposits, and a consequent depletion of trust reserves.

Heclo's last sentence in this quote about the depletion of reserves in the institutional accounts of America's governments is exactly on point. In a recent paper we wrote on our study of the effects of the 2005 hurricanes in the Gulf, we suggested that the Stafford Act (the law that created the Federal Emergency Management Agency) be amended to provide authority for the president to name an officer-in-charge when "megadisasters" occur. This official, the officer-in-charge, would have a pre-authorized amount of discretionary funding and be charged to spur intergovernmental coordination. If deemed appropriate, the officer-in-charge could recommend extraordinary national action in the form of legislation that could be considered on a fast-track basis like trade agreements and/or on a full-program veto-only basis by the president and the Congress as for military base closings. Such institutional creativity that preserves the legitimate role of elected officials is not new in America. In ways like this and others, the United States has historically modulated and insulated political processes. The establishment of independent regulatory commissions goes back to President Cleveland.

Good candidates as problem areas in which such institutional invention in government is needed now are: education and health reform; campaign finance and lobbying reform; and, at the state level, the overhaul of the budget process and local government consolidation. Following is a quick list of mind-stretching possibilities.

- We are engaged at the Rockefeller Institute in an exercise to invent intergovernmental instrumentation for collaboration between the federal government and the states to set and raise standards for K-12 education. Such an institution is needed to replace the multiplicity of requirements of George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind law, which has caused endless confusion and bickering. The federal government and the states need to work with, not against, each other to take on school reform.
- A commission established in 1997 to advise the Congress on Medicare recommended that health-care services be reimbursed on a "bundled" basis for major episodes of care, as opposed to having every service associated with a long hospital stay or major treatment billed separately as we do now. The Obama administration has endorsed this approach. I can think of few challenges more difficult than figuring out how to do this and setting up machinery to do it.
- "Sustainability" has become the "in word" in government. Institutional inventions are needed for energy sustainability and environmental sustainability, and to make sure we don't run out of drinking water.
- Small local governments, especially those in older region of the country, vigorously protect their jobs and turf and in the process provide public services that often are duplicative and inefficient. At the state and local levels, good government efforts to achieve even the smallest consolidations regularly get shot down. Local government reform is a big-time challenge.
- At every level of government, budgetary processes are strewn with gimmicks and short sighted. Legislate it today. Pay for it tomorrow. We won't be around then. The "pay go" standard of federal bud-

getting (pay-as-you-go) was abandoned. State and local governments are “required” to balance their budgets, but in reality they often don’t do so. Fundamental rearrangements of budgetary and fiscal oversight responsibilities are needed throughout government.

- Every legislative process has its rules. There is a vast literature on Robert’s Rules of Order and on the rules of individual legislatures. Radical as it would be, and hard as it would be, now would be a good time for a blue-ribbon national commission to be established to consider ways to speed up and facilitate action on urgent issues facing America’s governments. Back to basics. What kinds of processes exist or could be invented to identify alternative courses of faster action on selected critically important and deadlocked issues in ways that preserve the fundamental role and legitimacy of elected officials? Such a commission would analyze the greatest challenges the country faces and assess possible strategies and approaches for expediting action to meet them, changes that would have a chance of being accepted and adopted.

For this *Book List*, the purpose of which is to suggest things we can learn from books about the New Deal, this is probably enough to illustrate my conclusion that institutional reforms in government are needed now and crucial to the nation’s future.

Books About the New Deal Consulted for this Essay



Jonathan Alter, *The Defining Moment: FDR'S Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope* (Simon & Schuster, 2006)



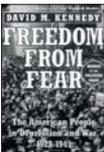
Adam Cohen, *Nothing to Fear: FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days That Created Modern America* (Penguin Press, 2009)



Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005)



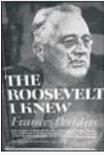
Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The First Thousand Days 1933-1936* (Simon & Schuster, 1953; reprinted by Da Capo Press, 1974)



David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1999)



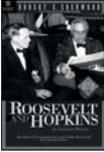
George McJimsey, *Harry Hopkins: Ally of the Poor and Defender of Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 1987)



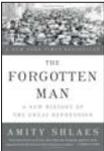
Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (Viking, 1946; reprinted by Harper & Row, 1965)



Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal* (Houghton Mifflin, 1958; reprinted by Mariner Books, 2003)



Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (Harper, 1948; reprinted by Enigma Books, 2008)



Amity Shlaes, *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* (HarperCollins, 2007)

EXCERPTS FROM INTRODUCTIONS TO PREVIOUS BOOK LISTS

2005 — The American Public Service

Here is a quartet of worthwhile books that connect the career paths of six decades of leaders in the American public service.

- *THE WISE MEN: SIX FRIENDS AND THE WORLD THEY MADE* by Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas
- *THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST* by David Halberstam
- *THE GUARDIANS: KINGMAN BREWSTER, HIS CIRCLE, AND THE RISE OF THE LIBERAL ESTABLISHMENT* by Geoffrey Kabaservice
- *RISE OF THE VULCANS: THE HISTORY OF BUSH'S WAR CABINET* by James Mann

Geoffrey Kabaservice's book, *THE GUARDIANS*, which grew out of his Yale Ph.D. thesis, is about liberal policies generally, rather than just foreign policy as is the case of the other three books. Kabaservice uses as his theme Plato's concept of *Guardians*:

If we want the best among our *Guardians*, we must take those naturally fitted to watch over a commonwealth. They must have the right sort of intelligence and ability; and also they must look upon the commonwealth as their special concern — the sort of concern that is felt for something so closely bound up with the one-self that its interests and fortunes, for good or ill, are held to be identical with one's own.

The Republic

Together, these books have a lot to say about the fall from grace of the American establishment. The two bookend books, by

Isaacson and Thomas and by James Mann, each profile six leaders of American foreign policy. Geoffrey Kabaservice's book also profiles six people, in this case members of the eastern liberal establishment.

Appointive public service in America involves big and deep layers of officials who serve for relatively short periods "at the pleasure" of an appointing official. U.S. government has a great many more appointive officials at every level — federal, state, and local — compared to other industrial democracies in the world.

The six Cold War Warriors for Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas — their group of wise men — are Dean Acheson, Averell Harriman, John McCloy, Jr., George Kennan, Charles "Chip" Bohlen, and Robert Lovell, all with roots in elite eastern educational and private-sector institutions, all white, all Protestant. The peak of their influence came in the Truman years. The six men are treated sympathetically by Isaacson and Thomas.

In contrast, Halberstam's book, *THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST*, is *anti-establishmentarian*. His principals served under Kennedy and Johnson in the Vietnam years. The linking figure is McGeorge Bundy; he is treated as a junior wise man by Isaacson and Thomas and as the principal villain for Halberstam:

It was the Establishment's conviction that it knew what was right and what was wrong for the country. In Bundy this was a particularly strong strain, as if his own talent and the nation's talent were all wrapped up together, producing a curious amalgam of public interest and self-interest, his destiny and the nation's destiny; a strong conscious moral sense of propriety, which he was not adverse to flashing at others, and a driving, almost naked thrust for power all at once.

Halberstam had written a long, biting article about McGeorge Bundy for *Harper's* magazine, which he expanded into *THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST* as a full-length treatment of foreign policymaking in the Kennedy-Johnson years. The story is a familiar one. Although I re-read this book to write this essay, I don't recommend it as strongly as the other three, in part because the story is so familiar and in part because Halberstam's book has a tone of high self-assurance that I found offputting the second time around.

THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST had its roots in Halberstam's life-forming, Pulitzer prize-winning reportage in his twenties when he covered the jungle battlefields of Vietnam, which is described in a book, *THE MAKING OF A QUAGMIRE*.

The fourth book in this quartet of books is the most contemporary — James Mann's *RISE OF THE VULCANS: THE HISTORY OF BUSH'S WAR CABINET*. His six leading characters are a very different group from the wise men both in their experience and their origins. There is one woman, Condoleezza Rice. There are two African Americans, Rice and Colin Powell. There are two academics, Rice and Paul Wolfowitz. Few of the Vulcans (the group was named by Rice for the statue of Vulcan in her steel-making home town of Birmingham, Alabama) are easterners or attended elite eastern schools. Donald Rumsfeld, a Chicagoan, graduated from Princeton. Dick Cheney spent two years on scholarship at Yale, but dropped out. He later graduated from the University of Wyoming. Richard Armitage, who in many respects was the wildest and most footloose of the Vulcans, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy.

For the wise men, elective office was looked down upon. Only Averell Harriman served as an elected official (one term as governor of New York; he was defeated for re-election in 1958 by Nelson Rockefeller). This was not the case for the Vulcans. Cheney and Rumsfeld served in elective office. Rumsfeld aspired to be president — strongly so. Powell flirted with running for that office. And Condoleezza Rice is said to be similarly tempted by elective office. (According to James Mann, Rice sought but did not receive the U.S. senatorial appointment in California when Pete Wilson moved to the governorship.)

The important unifying experience of James Mann's book is that all the Vulcans worked in the foreign policy field under George H.W. Bush, when they engineered a redirection of American foreign policy. In 1991, said Mann, "The Pentagon stood at a cross road." Political leaders were calling for a "peace dividend" in the form of steep cuts in defense spending.

In discussing what he called, "Death of an Empire, Birth of a Vision," Mann said that it was in 1991 when the Soviet Union imploded that the Vulcans devised "a new post-cold war rationale for American military power." Indeed, the Vulcans compared them-

selves to the Truman period Cold Warriors in terms of breaking new ground. The position that emerged, and which later was supported by the Clinton Administration, was presented in a Pentagon document that "outlined many of the ideas and policies that the Vulcans were to pursue when they returned to office in the George W. Bush administration." I quote:

The Pentagon document envisioned a future in which "the world order is ultimately backed by the U.S." The concept of collective security, on which the United States had relied during the cold war, was no longer at the head of American strategic thinking. The United Nations was given short shrift. Alliances like NATO would also be of reduced importance.

Kabaservice's Yale-based six-person eastern liberal establishmentarians consists of McGeorge Bundy, a close friend of Yale President Kingman Brewster (Yale '41); Cyrus Vance (Yale '39); John V. Lindsay (Yale '44); and Episcopal Bishop Paul Moore, Jr. (Yale '41). The sixth Guardian, Elliott Richardson, like the others, was a member of the Yale Corporation; however, Richardson along with Bundy was a Harvard graduate. Richardson was Class of 1941; Bundy was Class of 1940.

The most telling vignette about this changing of the guard from Truman to George W. Bush — gender, schools attended, professional experience — is reflected in the opening scene in *THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST*. Halberstam describes a lunch John F. Kennedy had with Robert Lovett during the post-election transition. Almost innocently, Kennedy told Lovett that he had been so busy campaigning that he now needed Lovett's help to govern. He asked Lovett to be secretary of defense, state, or treasury, but Lovett declined due to illness. Kennedy then proceeded to discuss with Lovett whom he should select for these and other high posts. Lovett's recommendations and those of others of the wise men carried considerable weight with Kennedy. This was the high point for the Cold War establishment. According to Isaacson and Thomas, twenty years later it "had nearly vanished."

The special fascination of the Kabaservice book is the way it chronicles the downfall of the liberal establishment in the face of new forces and voices — the women's movement, youth and campus dissent, and the civil rights revolution. Brewster's and

McGeorge Bundy's stories are especially interesting. Both men adopted a "Better-to-Join-Em-Than-Fight" strategy. They opened up the system at Yale and at the Ford Foundation, hoping to avoid the kinds of protests and violent incidents that they worried might otherwise occur. But rather than absorb these new forces, when all was said and done, they were overwhelmed by them.



2004 — The History of Religions

The theme for the 2004 *Book List* was the history of the world's three major monotheistic religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Rockefeller Institute's "Roundtable" project on Religion and Social Welfare Policy got me started on this. For three years, this was a major project at the Institute — to create a knowledge base on the George W. Bush administration's "faith-based initiative." We studied the effectiveness of faith-based social services and the legal and operational issues the initiative raised. The aim of the initiative, a goal also adopted by Al Gore in his 2000 presidential campaign, was to enable more religious organizations to receive government funds for social services. I found the subject of our Pew-funded "Roundtable" (headed by David Wright) fascinating and challenging. Although my outside reading on the history of religions was related to our project, it was more as background and historical.

There are a daunting number of books about the history of religions. The first book in this essay is by Karen Armstrong, her autobiographical book, *THROUGH THE NARROW GATE*, describing her years as a nun, entering a religious order in Birmingham, England, at age 17. She left seven years later to go to Oxford, beginning a new life as an expert and author on the history of religions. Armstrong's autobiographical book describes how she was sought by a priest with supervisory responsibilities for her convent, and how the Mother Superior would not help fend him off.

Another book by Armstrong selected as the lead for this essay is *A HISTORY OF GOD: THE 4,000-YEAR QUEST OF JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM*. It deals with the world's three major monotheistic religions, and how they are connected, both historically and theologically.

Although Armstrong "felt her belief in God slip quietly away," she writes passionately about the importance of religion in human experience. The following passage, although it is long, warrants quoting in full.

Yet my study of the history of religion has revealed that human beings are spiritual animals. Indeed there is a case for arguing that *Homo sapiens* is also *Homo religious*. Men and women started to worship gods as soon as they became recognizably human; they created religions at the same time as they created works of art. This was not simply because they wanted to propitiate powerful forces; these early faiths expressed the wonder and mystery that seem always to have been an essential component of the human experience of this beautiful yet terrifying world. Like art, religion has been an attempt to find meaning and value in life, despite the suffering that flesh is heir to. Like any other human activity, religion can be abused, but it seems to have been something that we have always done. It was not tacked on to a primordially secular nature by manipulative kings and priests but was natural to humanity. Indeed, our current secularism is an entirely new concept, unprecedented in human history. We have yet to see how it will work.

The theme of Armstrong's history of God is that the world's three largest monotheistic religions developed their concept of God in ways that are remarkably similar.

The second book on this list is Jack Miles's Pulitzer Prize-winning book about the Old Testament — *GOD: A BIOGRAPHY*. Miles, director of the Humanities Center at the Claremont Graduate School, is a former Jesuit who pursued his religious studies in Rome and Jerusalem, and has a Ph.D. in Near Eastern languages from Harvard University. His biography of God is unusual and ironic. The irony is that for Orthodox Jews and fundamental Christians, this is what you are supposed to do — take the Bible literally. Yet they cannot like (indeed, I don't see how they could abide) the way Jack Miles does it. "What is the mood of the Bible?"

he asks. "Its mood varies, of course, but with impressive frequency, it is one of irritability, denunciation, and angry complaint."

Miles writes about the development of God in the books of the Old Testament, treated in the order in which they appear. He interprets God's changing moods and ideas about how He defines Himself, as well as His views on His roles and powers, shifting away from the highest moral tone in Deuteronomy and Second Isaiah to the harshness of the Book of Job, and then God's total silence in the closing books of the Bible in which He does not speak or act directly. This is a disrespectful book; however, by staying close to the text, it is a reminder of what is in the Old Testament.

The book I read on the history of the Jewish religion is Paul Johnson's *A HISTORY OF THE JEWS*. Johnson is also the author of *A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY*, and is a prolific writer. His earliest writings were about religion. He later became converted to political conservatism. Beginning in the 1980s with his widely read book, *MODERN TIMES: THE WORLD FROM THE TWENTIES TO THE NINETIES*, he is best known for his strong right-wing views, more so than for his religious histories.

At its roots, Johnson's book on Judaism has a sad but, at the same time, positive tone. He treats the Diaspora, the scapegoating of Jews in the Crusades, ostensibly directed at Muslims, the ghetto, pogroms, and the Holocaust. He describes heroes, martyrs, villains, and victims. Johnson, who is not Jewish, is admiring of "the sheer span of Jewish history" (four millennia) and its penetration of, and impact on, so many societies and nations. He emphasizes, as well he should, the welcome change of "tolerant religious pluralism" in the United States of America. There was, he points out, a special table at the feast in Philadelphia to commemorate the new constitution where the food conformed to Jewish dietary laws.

The Jews had something to celebrate. In the light of their history, they stood to gain more from the new American constitution than any other group — the separation of church and state, general liberty of conscience and not least the end of all religious tests in appointments. The constitution worked, too, in giving liberties to the Jews, though feet were dragged in some states.

Turning to Christianity, two books made a strong impression — one about Jesus and the other about St. Paul. *JESUS: A LIFE*, similar to Miles's book on the Old Testament, is a biographical treatment of the life of Jesus based on what is known about Him. The author, A.N. Wilson, says that writing this book led him to admit that he "found it impossible to believe that a first-century Galilean man had at any time in his life believed himself to be the Second Person in the Trinity." This, said Wilson, is because "it was such an inherently improbable thing for a monotheist Jew to believe." Wilson, who also wrote a book on St. Paul, in *JESUS: A LIFE* credits St. Paul with inventing Christianity and devotes thirty pages to him right after the introductory chapter. Wilson notes, as do other authors, that the letters of St. Paul are the only books in the New Testament written by a historically identifiable person.

Paul's most famous letter to the small Christian community in Rome, which he was about to visit, says Wilson, is "one of the most influential books ever written. It had a profound influence and life changing effect on such figures as Augustine of Hippo, Luther and Calvin and could therefore be said to be one of the key books to understanding the intellectual and social development of the Western world." But reading St. Paul's letter to the Romans is not easy. Its meaning is elusive.

The second book I recommend on the early history of Christianity is *SAINTE PAUL* by Michael Grant. It is a dense book. I bought it for 25 cents at a town fair in Rochester, Vermont. Grant, also British, wrote several books on the history of Christianity. According to Grant, "Scarcely anyone has ever changed the course of history more than Paul." Grant's book begins with a description of St. Paul based on what is known or believed about his appearance and demeanor.

Paul is said to have been a man of small stature, with a bald head and bow legs, who carried himself well. His eyebrows met in the middle, and his nose was rather large and he was full of grace, for at times he seemed a man and at times he had the face of an angel.

Paul, according to Grant, was "torn apart by inner conflicts." He was fiery; his letters "display a startling mixture of conciliatory friendliness and harsh, bitter, inexorable bullying." His great

achievements were establishing Christianity as a separate religion (not an offspring of Judaism), not requiring circumcision or the rigorous execution of the Law, and insisting on the divinity of Jesus.

Christianity went from having martyrs to producing inquisitions. In 313, with the Edict of Milan, Constantine reversed the Roman Empire policy of hostility to Christianity, embracing it and making it the official religion of the Empire. Paul Johnson says this was "one of the decisive events of world history." Johnson's book, *A HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY*, has been on my list for a long time. It presents sweeping, readable accounts of what happened to the Catholic Church, often under bad popes with mean policies from the fourth century to and through the Reformation.

Roland H. Bainton's *HERE I STAND: A LIFE OF MARTIN LUTHER* has endured for more than five decades, and although there are newer biographies of Martin Luther, Bainton's is lively and interesting. (Also, because of my habit of stocking up on used books, I had it handy.) Bainton not only provides rich narrative, but also wonderful woodcuts (many of them cartoons) from Luther's day about his exploits. One thing I didn't know is that Luther at age 42 married Katherine von Bora (she was 26), in part as an act of defiance to Rome. The Luthers had what sounds like an almost raucous household, producing six children of their own, bringing up four orphaned children, and taking in boarders "to eke out the finances."

Luther had a knack for speaking to the common folk, although not everyone appreciated his sometimes almost ribald personality. This from Karen Armstrong in *A HISTORY OF GOD*:

Luther claimed that he had been reborn when he had formulated his doctrine of justification, but in fact it does not seem as though all his anxieties had been allayed. He remained a disturbed, angry and violent man. All the major religious traditions claim that the acid test of any spirituality is the degree to which it had been integrated into daily life.... A sense of peace, serenity and loving-kindness are the hallmarks of all true religious insight. Luther, however, was a rabid anti-Semite, a misogynist, was convulsed with a loathing and horror of sexuality and believed that all rebellious parents should be killed. His vision of a wrathful God filled him with personal rage, and it has been sug-

gested that his belligerent character did great harm to the Reformation.

In America, the largest growth in recent years has come, not from the longest standing Christian denominations, but from evangelicals. I have had the benefit these past two years of meeting leaders of major evangelical groups and I am reading their publications, subscribing as I now do to *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, the magazine of the Assembly of God, one of the fastest growing denominations in the U.S. Two books on evangelicalism are included here, one a history and one a biography: Grant Wacker's *HEAVEN BELOW: EARLY PENTECOSTALS AND AMERICAN CULTURE* and Marshall Frady's *BILLY GRAHAM: A PARABLE OF AMERICAN RIGHTEOUSNESS*.

America is a religious country as shown by spiritual outpourings in the "Great Awakenings." James Reichley dates these "widespread revivals of religious faith" in three periods — the 1740s, the early years of the nineteenth century, and the 1880s. Some scholars, Reichley says, suggested in the 1990s that America might be on the verge of a Fourth Great Awakening. The rising role of Pentecostalism, related as it is to the faith-based initiative of the Bush administration to reach out to these groups and also to minority churches, reflects a mood of heightened religiosity.

Grant Wacker's *HEAVEN BELOW* is a history of American Pentecostals. He dates the peak of their communions visibly filled with the New Testament church's supernatural powers as roughly a two-decade period, 1885-1905. Over time, Wacker says, Pentecostal or Pentecostal-like teaching and practices increasingly overflowed their specialized churches and penetrated Roman Catholicism and older Protestant denominations. Wacker cites a Gallup poll showing that 19 percent (29 million adult Americans) classified themselves as Pentecostal or charismatic Christians in 1978. He cites a study showing that, worldwide, 525 million people consider themselves Pentecostal or charismatics, making this, says Wacker, "the largest aggregation of Christians on the planet outside of the Roman Catholic Church."

Wacker's accounts of the origins and practices of Pentecostalism dramatize his subject. He describes speaking with tongues — *glossolalia* — how it developed and can be viewed, and

how it even infused missionaries with the belief that they could convert native populations by appearing to speak spontaneously to them in their native language. Wacker writes in a vivid way about his search for the meaning and origins of the Pentecostal movement.

Stepping back in time, quietly slipping into early Pentecostal's kitchens and parlors, I heard, first of all, a great deal of talk about Holy Ghost baptism. I heard how God's Spirit entered their bodies, took control of their tongues, and gave advice on life's most mundane decisions. I also heard about the Bible, its power, its beauty, and the way it served as the final authority on all questions of daily living as well as human salvation. And I heard about signs and wonders — drunkards delivered, eyes restored, unlettered folk speaking foreign languages they had never studied. The more I listened to those discussions, however, the more I realized that most of them were really about something else. And that something else, of course, was God. Occasionally the longing to touch God bordered on mysticism, a craving to be absorbed into the One or even to obliterate one's own identity into the identity of the All. But typically it suggested a yearning simply to know the divine mind and will as directly and as purely as possible, without the distorting refractions of human volition, traditions, or speculations.

The other recommended book on evangelicalism is a biography — *BILLY GRAHAM: A PARABLE OF AMERICAN RIGHTEOUSNESS* by Marshall Frady. Graham lived a charmed life. Handsome and with a winning personality, his preaching had a huge impact. Frady takes as his theme that Graham was like Melville's *BILLY BUDD*, "A virtue went out of him," said Melville, "sugaring the sour.... Much of a child man ... he possessed that kind and degree of intelligence going along with the unconventional rectitude of a sound human nature."

Graham's evangelical ministry can be dated by the terms of U.S. presidents. Emerging as a national figure in the fifties, golfing with Eisenhower, he was "politely abided" by Kennedy, and influenced both Presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush, although his closest presidential ties were with Richard Nixon, whose downfall created a personal crisis for Graham. Lyndon Johnson's presidential assistant, Bill Moyers, is quoted by Frady.

Moyers described how Lyndon Johnson invited Graham to stay with him at the White House whenever he was in Washington and feigned hurt when he didn't do so. Indicating the power of the evangelical movement, Moyers said Johnson saw Graham as a symbol of an important national constituency.

Johnson was also uncannily shrewd about how vicarious identifications work among the American people, and how, when all those people saw Billy at the White House, it was as if they were there, they had been accepted into the Oval Office in the surrogate of Billy. He knew that if Billy were part of the White House ceremony, to that degree he had assimilated Billy's constituency. When he ran into issues particularly sensitive and difficult with that constituency — like the poverty program — he would hoist Billy Graham up the flagpole. Every man became a metaphor to him — a political metaphor, in the classic Greek sense of politics.

Graham's preaching did not satisfy the most fundamentalist evangelical Christians. Nonetheless, his "crusades," held in convention centers and stadiums throughout the country, reinforce the point made about America's distinctively religious character.

Two attributes cut across the major monotheistic faiths. All three at different times in their history and in different ways wrestled (and still do) with reconciling the rational and the spiritual. They rely to different degrees and in different ways on reason and mystery, which Karen Armstrong calls the "*ineffable*," meaning it is incapable of being expressed in words. She says all mysteries don't need to be solved; mystery and myth to her are not bad words or ideas.

Two books I read on Islam were Karen Armstrong's *ISLAM: A SHORT HISTORY* and Bernard Lewis's *WHAT WENT WRONG? THE CLASH BETWEEN ISLAM AND MODERNITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST*. With 1.6 billion adherents, Islam is the world's second largest religion.

Muhammad, an Arab businessman of the seventh century, had an out-of-body religious experience like that of St. Paul on the road to Damascus that changed world history. For two years, Muhammad kept quiet about his experience, but then, though not lit-

erate, he preached a new faith in the *QURAN*, “a masterpiece of Arab prose and poetry,” says Armstrong, which was “revealed to him by verse.” Armstrong says social justice was “the crucial virtue of Islam ... characterized by practical compassion” and that “the emancipation of women was dear to the Prophet’s heart.”

“For centuries,” says Bernard Lewis, “the world view and self view of Muslims seemed well grounded. Islam represented the greatest military power on earth.” Arab innovations in the manufacture of paper and in mathematics with the introduction of Arabic numerals were part of a rich heritage. Then things changed.

The reason, says Lewis, was advances in Europe — politically, militarily, scientifically, and economically. The defeat of the Moors in Spain in 1492, the liberation of Russia from the rule of Islam, other military losses, colonialism, and the Industrial Revolution — in short, the rising role of the West coming together. Bernard Lewis says separating church and state, which Islam does not do, is rooted in Christianity.

Secularism in the modern political meaning — the idea that religion and political authority, church and state are different, and can or should be separated — is, in a profound sense, Christian. Its origins may be traced in the teachings of Christ, confirmed by the experience of the first Christians; its later development was shaped and, in a sense, imposed by subsequent history of Christendom. The persecutions endured by the early church made it clear that a separation between the two was possible; the persecutions inflicted by later churches persuaded many Christians that such a separation was necessary.



2003 — How to Read Nonfiction

Fiction is defined as “something invented by the imagination or feigned, an invented story.” Nonfiction is, simply, not fiction. The boundary line is unclear. Thucydides said writing history is “labo-

rious" because "Eye witnesses of the same occurrences gave different accounts of them, varying with their memory and their interest in the actions of one side or the other." This is a constant challenge for readers, to decide what to believe.

Edmund Morris's book, *THEODORE REX*, the second in his trilogy about Theodore Roosevelt, makes the point. Morris begins when Roosevelt heard about McKinley's decline and rushed off to Buffalo from vacationing in the Adirondacks. Headed for Albany, slouched in his carriage seat, TR is described by Morris as "muttering to himself," with "Slight, if sincere, grief for McKinley — a cold blooded politician he had never more cared for" as he "struggled in his breast with more violent emotions regarding the assassin.... In his opinion, those bullets at Buffalo had been fired not merely by a man, but at the very heart of the American Republic." There is every reason to accept that these were Roosevelt's thoughts when McKinley was dying in Buffalo, but there is no way of knowing.

We often read right past words like thought, reflected, believed, wanted, admired, hated in describing people's motives and emotions. Indeed, without such insights, biographical writing would bog down. This is not to suggest that as a reader of nonfiction you should miss Morris's book *THEODORE REX*. It is smart, fascinating, well paced, and witty. TR himself read voraciously and wrote about history almost as actively as Winston Churchill.

When Edmund Morris wrote the book he produced just before *THEODORE REX* — his book about Ronald Reagan after years of observing him closely in the White House — he not only filled in thought processes. In an effort to make his story interesting, he invented a fictional character to observe, comment on, and actually participate in the life of Ronald Reagan.

Written initially as a senior thesis at Brown University Jeff Shesol's book, *MUTUAL CONTEMPT* is all about feelings. It is an account of the relationship between Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kennedy. The book begins when Johnson was nominated in 1960 to run as vice president with John F. Kennedy and ends with Robert Kennedy's assassination. The first line tells it all. "Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kennedy loathed each other." I found this book credible, convincing, and sad. I couldn't find any reviews that

faulted Shesol's accounts of the events portrayed — the Vietnam War, race, the urban crisis, the Great Society.

The Shesol book is about what was going on inside the heads and hearts of the protagonists. It is also interesting that this good book didn't get much of a ride. It may be the first book I have featured on this list that almost immediately was remaindered. I bought my copy, and copies for friends, for \$5.00. The list price for the paperback is \$17.95. The book is worth the full price.



2002 — The Culture Wars

The theme this year is “culture wars.” I focus on the debate about whether there is, or should be, a canon of great books passed down as a body of literature central to Western Civilization. I got interested in this controversy by reading a book of a *genre* I particularly like — surveys of people and ideas that bring historical events to life. *THE MODERN MIND: AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF THE 20TH CENTURY* is Peter Watson's account of major bodies of ideas with the name of each author of the books he draws on printed in bold face. His book treats a wide range of subjects in a lively way and at the same time is a useful reference tool for finding out more about a particular theory or thinker. The section that led to this year's theme of “culture wars” begins by describing a September 1988 conference at Duke University on the future of liberal education. The conference featured liberal academics in the humanities who were angered at cultural conservatives, the “enemy in chief” being Allan Bloom, whose widely read book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, was published in 1987. According to Watson, it “had broken out of the scholarly ghetto for which it was intended and had made Bloom a celebrity (and a millionaire).” I read Allan Bloom and his unrelated sidekick, Harold Bloom, and scanned other books criticizing political correctness and the alleged aimlessness and deterioration of college and university teaching. The authors included Roger Kimball, Dinesh d'Souza, and Gertrude Himmelfarb.

Watson's chapter on "culture wars" led me to the book described next — my special favorite for this year, which he describes as "the most original response to the culture wars," David Denby's *GREAT BOOKS*. Denby, a movie critic for *New York* magazine and the *New Yorker*, said he read with growing amazement of the debate about higher education. After working himself up to a "high state of indignation," he said that his wife, a novelist who had "grown tired of my outrage," challenged him to return to Columbia University where Denby had been a student in the early 1960s to retake the University's set of year-long required courses, "Literature and Humanities" and "Contemporary Civilization." The courses date back to the 1930s, although they have changed over the years. They are taught in small discussion groups and feature readings of original texts with the purpose being to stimulate critical thinking.

Denby is no Allan Bloom. He is an unabashed liberal. He is also a great fan of the Columbia program and of its core courses — as a way "of making a self." The approach in Denby's book, rather than literary commentary, is to describe in rich prose the instructors, fellow students, books read, and his own reflections about returning as a student. Denby's descriptions of the class discussions of Homer, Rousseau, Plato, The Bible, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Shakespeare, Marx, Nietzsche, Hume, Conrad, and Woolf (to mention some of the leading characters) are choice.

These books — or any such representative selection — speak most powerfully of what a human being can be. They dramatize the utmost any of us is capable of in love, suffering, and knowledge. They offer the most direct representation of the possibilities of civil existence and the disaster of its dissolution. Reading and discussing the books, the students begin the act of repossession. They scrape away the media haze of secondhandedness.

His conclusion is that there isn't a canon in the sense that these authors have shared and similar ideas that have evolved over time. Their works are fundamentally in conflict. Rather than being cohesive and formulaistic, the two courses, says Denby, are "the most radical in the undergraduate curriculum." I delighted in this book, and found myself going back more than once to favored sections.

My own undergraduate education at Brown came at a time when the University was experimenting, under a Carnegie Foundation grant, with a program for freshman and sophomores called "IC," *Identification and Criticism of Ideas*. Like the Columbia curriculum and that of the University of Chicago, "IC" (as it was called) involved small group discussions, reading original texts, and above all was meant to encourage critical thinking. It changed my life. And it influenced my taste for spirited criticism (something of an oxymoron), history, and biography — indeed, nonfiction generally. Reading, as the Columbia curriculum intends, defines the self. If I had a foundation, I would give grants to universities and colleges for courses like Columbia's and Brown's "IC" program.



2001 — The Reconstruction Period in American History

David McCullough tells this story in his biography of Harry S. Truman. An editor from Doubleday visited Truman at his suite at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City after Truman had left the White House. He arrived early. Mrs. Truman told him that Mr. Truman was just getting up and asked the visitor to go right into the bedroom. The president was described as "sitting in a big chair with two stacks of books on either side of his chair." The publisher said, "I'm so pleased to see that you are buying all those books. I suppose you read yourself to sleep at night." "No, young man," said Truman, "I read myself awake."

Book lovers are a dedicated lot. It means a great deal to them to talk about their reading preferences. Over the past year, a focus of a lot of my reading has been the period just before and after the Civil War. I began by rereading David Herbert Donald's biography of Lincoln. That led me to several books on the prewar years and the Reconstruction period.

Eric Foner's book, *RECONSTRUCTION: AMERICA'S UNFINISHED REVOLUTION, 1863-1877*, is revisionist history. His thesis is that the Radical Republicans and the Carpet Bagger weren't vil-

lains, and that the Southern “Redeemers” were. Next, I read Fawn Brodie’s old but excellent book about Thaddeus Stevens, *THADDEUS STEVENS: SCOURGE OF THE SOUTH*, which also makes the list. And then a book that is hard to find, and also worthy, about one of my favorite Civil War-period figures, *WILLIAM HENRY SEWARD: LINCOLN’S RIGHT HAND*, Seward was governor of New York, almost the Republican presidential candidate in 1860, and Lincoln’s and Andrew Johnson’s loyal secretary of state. (By the way, the author, John M. Taylor, is the son of General Maxwell Taylor, about whom he also wrote a biography.)

I also read an incredible Civil War book about Andrew Johnson (Fawn Brodie called him the “Tailor in the White House”), written by Claude G. Bowers on the Reconstruction period, *THE TRAGIC ERA: THE REVOLUTION AFTER LINCOLN*. Bowers’s book propounds and documents a view exactly the opposite of Foner’s about the Reconstruction. The Southern Redeemers are his heroes.

Striking facts about this 19th century period are the number of weak presidents the country had and the strength of Congressional leaders. Not just Andrew Johnson, who lost his power to the Congress, with the crotchety Thaddeus Stevens as the ringleader. After Andrew Jackson, there was the “Little Magician from Kinderhook, New York”; Martin Van Buren, who suffered mightily as a consequence of the financial panic of 1837; then William Henry Harrison (who served for only one month); John Tyler, the first vice president to accede to the presidency; Zachary Taylor (although he served for less than half a year); Millard Fillmore; Franklin Pierce; James Buchanan; Andrew Johnson; Ulysses S. Grant; Rutherford B. Hayes; James Garfield; and Chester A. Arthur. Chester A. Arthur, who came to the presidency when Garfield was assassinated, a New Yorker buried in Albany, is a favorite historical character of mine. Though a political spoilsman and accidental president, he served with dignity in the office. Three strong 19th century presidents not on this list are James Knox Polk, Abraham Lincoln, and Grover Cleveland.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF OTHER RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Dean Acheson, *PRESENT AT THE CREATION: MY YEARS IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT*. A personal account of the birth of the institutions that bound the West together against the post World War II political and military threat from the Soviet Union. Acheson, Cold War warrior *par excellence*, was the leader of THE WISE MEN. He called Truman "his chief," gave LBJ advice, and died peacefully of a stroke in 1971.

Kenneth D. Ackerman, *BOSS TWEED: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CORRUPT POL WHO CONCEIVED THE SOUL OF MODERN NEW YORK*. This is a good political biography, especially for New Yorkers. Tweed famously said in a jail interview in 1877, "The fact is New York politics were always dishonest — long before my time. There never was a time you couldn't buy the Alderman.... A politician coming forward takes things as they are. The population is too hopelessly split to govern under universal suffrage, except by the bribery of patronage or purchase."

Henry Adams, *THE EDUCATION OF HENRY ADAMS*. *The Education* is the intimately described life of John Adams's great grandson, who lived into the 20th century. It is the confessions of a person who could not come to terms with America in a changing world.

I particularly like what Adams said about both Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. When his friend TR became president, Adams reflected that it would never be the same again, "A friend in power is a friend lost."

Later, when Adams befriended the young FDR and his wife, he is reported to have said to them when FDR was assistant secretary of the Navy, pointing to the White House across the street from where he (Adams) lived: "Young man, I have lived in this house many years and seen the occupants of that

white house across the square come and go and nothing that you minor officials or the occupant of that house can do will affect the history of the world for long." (As told by Nathan Miller in his biography of FDR.)

Stephen E. Ambrose, *UNDAUNTED COURAGE: MERIWETHER LEWIS, THOMAS JEFFERSON, AND THE OPENING OF THE AMERICAN WEST*. I wasn't a special admirer of Ambrose because he wrote so much and obviously so fast, but this is a fine book and a story he knew, loved, and lived vicariously.

David Haward Bain, *EMPIRE EXPRESS: BUILDING THE FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD*. This book packs a wallop. When Brian Lamb interviewed the author on C-SPAN, he got the story into focus. He showed pictures of the founders of the first transcontinental railroad (Huntington, Hopkins, Crocker, Stanford, Rep. Oaks Ames) and asked about each of them, "Was he a crook?" Bain's answer invariable was, yes, all of them were — which eventually culminated in the *Credit Mobilier* scandal with its payoffs to leading politicians. Everyone was on the take!

Carlos Baker, *ERNEST HEMINGWAY: A LIFE STORY*. The definitive biography of Hemingway by former Princeton professor Carlos Baker about a "man's man ... proud of his manhood."

Carlos Baker, *EMERSON AMONG THE ECCENTRICS: A GROUP PORTRAIT*. Along with recounting the life of Emerson and the history of the transcendentalism, Baker had a lot to say about Emerson's friends — Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman, Melville, and others associated with the cultural flowering of New England. My dictionary defines transcendentalism as "the 19th century New England movement stressing the presence of the divine within man as a source of truth and a guide to action."

Leonard Baker, *JOHN MARSHALL: A LIFE IN LAW*. Baker ably describes Marshall's contribution to the development of American government.

John M. Barry, *RISING TIDE: THE GREAT MISSISSIPPI FLOOD OF 1927 AND HOW IT CHANGED AMERICA*. This book is about a 1927 disaster in the Mississippi Delta and how Herbert

Hoover dealt with it as the officer-in-charge based for two months in Memphis. President Coolidge wouldn't have anything to do with a federal response to the flood. This story of politics and the River makes for an exciting read. The flood catapulted then Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover to the 1928 presidential nomination. The rest, as they say, is history.

Irving H. Bartlett, *DANIEL WEBSTER*. Webster's huge ego is a story all by itself. This book describes Webster's turbulent times.

W. Jackson Bate, *SAMUEL JOHNSON*. Not Boswell's Johnson, but that of Harvard Professor Bate, published in 1975. This biography of England's leading literary scholar of the eighteenth century won the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Award, and the Pulitzer Prize. Bate recounts Johnson's wit as well as his accomplishments as a man of letters, describing his essays, his edition of Shakespeare's works, and his *Dictionary of the English Language*.

Andrew Scott Berg, *MAXWELL PERKINS, EDITOR OF GENIUS*. Maxwell Perkins, an editor at Scribners, discovered Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Thomas Wolfe. This is one of the books that has been on this list the longest, and is one of the best biographies I know that captures life experiences in a flowing, intelligent way, not only of a person, but also of the times. It was Berg's first book, begun as a senior thesis under Professor Carlos Baker when Berg was an undergraduate at Princeton.

Paul Berman, *DEBATING P.C.: THE CONTROVERSY OVER POLITICAL CORRECTNESS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES*. This book contains a cross-section of commentary and a balanced introductory essay on the controversy about political correctness, which was the theme of the 2002 *Book List*. Berman's conclusion is: "The debate over political correctness has managed to raise nearly every important question connected to culture and education — the proper relation of culture to a democratic society, the relation of literature to life, the purpose of higher education. Naturally to raise a question is not to settle it, which means the crisis in education goes on. But only in medicine are crises a sign of impending death. In intellectual matters, crises are signs of life."

Peter L. Bernstein, *WEDDING OF THE WATERS: THE ERIE CANAL AND THE MAKING OF A GREAT NATION*. Another good book for New York wonks. The Canal was a great public work that Governor De Witt Clinton heroically championed and led. The irony is it moved the grain milling business from Rochester to the Midwest. The moral — beware of unanticipated consequences.

Benson Bobrick, *ANGEL IN THE WHIRLWIND: THE TRIUMPH OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*. A lively, flowing account of the American Revolution. From victory at Lexington and Concord in April 1775 to the Treaty of Paris nearly a decade later (1783), Bobrick's account of the battles and George Washington's artful political and military "balancing act" makes this book special.

At the end of the war when the Treaty of Paris was proclaimed at Williamsburg, Bobrick recounts the order for the procession of that day: "From the Court House the Citizens are to proceed to the College [of William and Mary], and make proclamation at that Place, from whence they are to proceed to the Capitol and make proclamation there, and from thence to the Raleigh [Tavern] & pass the rest of the Day." Quoting the studious John Adams, Bobrick says that by his early twenties, his constitution had been impaired (so a doctor told him) by too much study, which had "corrupted the whole mass of my blood and juices." So, readers, be careful!

Catherine Drinker Bowen, *FRANCIS BACON: THE TEMPER OF A MAN*. Francis Bacon was a scheming politician of the Elizabethan period best remembered now for his sideline as a philosopher. The *Novum Organum* (1620), which laid the groundwork for empiricism and induction and the scientific method, is seen by many as the beginning of modern science. Not so, said Bowen, "Bacon was not a scientist but the propagandist of science. He was the prophet who urged men out of sterile scholasticism into the adventurous, experimental future."

Catherine Drinker Bowen, *MIRACLE AT PHILADELPHIA*. This is one of my favorite books. I recommend it for young people. It is the story of the writing of the U.S. Constitution — an exciting, easy-to-read description of the origins of our government.

tal system. Fifty-five white Protestant men met in strict secrecy for four hot summer months in Philadelphia, with the delegates elected by the states, and voting *en bloc*. At the end of the proceedings, thirty-nine delegates were present, with not all of them participating actively. George Washington presided in a dignified, aloof manner, and was habitually silent. Bowen describes the scenes, the issues, the plans (New Jersey's, Virginia's, and Connecticut's), saying forthrightly that her book "celebrates" this "grand national experiment." She notes that both Washington and Madison in letters to friends about the Convention called it a "*miracle*," although at times they despaired of its occurring. Madison recorded the proceedings in code, participated in the debates, and more than any other Founder put his stamp on their handiwork.

Madison, Hamilton, Jay, *THE FEDERALIST PAPERS*. The greatest American political science book. It is all the more amazing because these were also among America's earliest op-ed articles. The best edition is the Mentor Edition edited by Clinton Rossiter. Papers numbers 10, 39, and 51, all by Madison, are the most important statements of the Constitutional idealism.

Taylor Branch, *PARTING THE WATERS: AMERICA IN THE KING YEARS, 1954-63*. The rise of Martin Luther King, Jr.; the Kings vs. the Kennedys is the plot line. If you have to choose one book on the civil rights movement, my recommendation is the book by John Lewis, *WALKING WITH THE WIND*, described below, a rare autobiographical book notable for its balance, bravery, and personal candor.

Fawn M. Brodie, *THADDEUS STEVENS: SCOURGE OF THE SOUTH*. Stevens has to be one of the most irascible figures in American history. He cared not a wit whether anyone liked him, and was way ahead of his times in powering through civil rights laws and constitutional amendments to provide equal opportunity. He had a mulatto mistress and a clubfoot, wore an ill-fitting wig, was detested by Southerners, and pioneered free public education in Pennsylvania. Brodie's book, written long before her psychological biography of Thomas Jefferson, was published in 1959. Although out of print, this book is well

worth finding. After all, what are book sales and used books for?

J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlich, *THE WESTERN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION, FROM LEONARDO TO HEGEL*. This book has legs and an interesting history. Bronowski (author of the well-known book and TV series on *Civilization*) teamed up in 1960 with MIT humanities professor Bruce Mazlich to write a book for engineering students on the intellectual history of the West. The authors use the lives of important figures and major events to dramatize ideas and periods in a way that give life to a subject often portrayed in dry terms. The leading figures are Leonardo, Machiavelli, Thomas More, Luther, Calvin, Erasmus, Francis Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Jefferson, Jeremy Bentham, Robert Owen, Kant, Hegel, and Edmund Burke. The authors succeeded so well in blending the stories of these lives and others with great ideas in history that the publisher, Harper, has reissued this book every couple of years and it remains in print. No doubt, it is a good seller. It deserves to be.

Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *GOTHAM: A HISTORY OF NEW YORK CITY TO 1898*. Looks and feels like a coffee table book, but is readable despite being 1,379 pages long.

Robert A. Caro, *MASTER OF THE SENATE: THE YEARS OF LYNDON JOHNSON*. This big book, 1,049 pages, is the third in Caro's series on Lyndon Johnson. Actually, it is only the fourth book he has written. The book took him twelve years to write. Describing his debts in writing this book, Caro begins by referring to "the research team," and then says that the team was two people, Caro and his wife, Ina. Caro has a nice way of crediting the authors of books he uses. This book was featured on the 2001 *Book List* because the theme was about writing nonfiction.

On Johnson's civil rights record, Caro says:

Lyndon Baines Johnson was the greatest champion that black Americans and Mexican-Americans and indeed all Americans of color had in the White House, the greatest champion they had in all the halls of government. With the single exception of Lincoln, he was the greatest champion

with a white skin that they had in the history of the Republic.

The first one hundred pages of Caro's book is on the history of the U.S. Senate as a stodgy, recalcitrant institution that Lyndon Johnson's "mastery" fundamentally changed.

Robert A. Caro, *THE POWER BROKER: ROBERT MOSES AND THE FALL OF NEW YORK*. Caro's account of the life and times of New York's master builder, Robert Moses, is a must-read for public administrators, and fits well with the 2005 themes about public service (a tough business) and public management (no piece of cake either).

Jimmy Carter, *AN HOUR BEFORE DAYLIGHT: MEMORIES OF A RURAL BOYHOOD*. This autobiographical book by Jimmy Carter is about his Depression-era boyhood in rural Georgia. The book has an innocence that tells a lot about the man, his mindset, and his values. It is an upbeat, hopeful book for young readers.

Ron Chernow, *THE HOUSE OF MORGAN: AN AMERICAN BANKING DYNASTY & THE RISE OF MODERN FINANCE*. A fine portrayal of the rise of an American banking dynasty and of modern finance.

Ron Chernow, *TITAN: THE LIFE OF JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, SR.* The title of this book should be *two* lives, rather than one: John D. Rockefeller, as the relentless, swashbuckling creator of the great kerosene trust, and later as the monarch of a charitable empire he built up in almost four decades of retirement right up until his death at the age of 98 in 1937.

Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor, *AMERICAN PHARAOH: MAYOR RICHARD J. DALEY: HIS BATTLE FOR CHICAGO AND THE NATION*. Born in 1902, Richard Daley died in 1976, serving as Chicago's mayor for 22 years. This biography shows how Daley sought to balance irreconcilable goals of race and politics in America.

Daley decided to make a strong appeal to the white "backlash" voters in the Bungalow Belt who had begun to desert him in the 1962 bond referendum and the 1963 mayoral election. He would come out more directly against open

housing and equal rights for blacks, so there would be no confusion among white voters about where he stood. He intended to hold on to as much of his black support as he could, but he would do that not by his stand on the issues, but through patronage and the work of the black ward organizations.

The most dramatic confrontation came when Martin Luther King, Jr., moved his headquarters to Chicago in 1966. Daley met with King, never Bull-Connored him, and sought to outfox him by showing that their goals were similar. He largely succeeded. This, too, is an appropriate book for the 2005 theme on the real politics of domestic government.

Margaret L. Coit, *JOHN C. CALHOUN: AMERICAN PORTRAIT*. Calhoun, the Nullifier, was Andrew Jackson's first vice president. The two men came to detest each other. Jackson said he should have hung Calhoun, and he wished he had. Calhoun eventually resigned as vice president and returned to the Senate to harass Jackson and his successors.

Peter Collier and David Horowitz have written a series of family books — the Roosevelts, Kennedys, Rockefellers, and Fords. They are fun to read, gossipy and yet often insightful, with sometimes unkind stories about the relatives, friends, and offspring of America's patriarchs and matriarchs.

Henry Steele Commager, *THE AMERICAN MIND: AN INTERPRETATION OF AMERICAN THOUGHT AND CHARACTER SINCE THE 1880s*. This book is an intellectual story of the U.S. from 1880 to 1950 by one of America's great historians. It reflects almost an innocence about the spirit of America and the rise of industrialization and urbanism, in the first part of the twentieth century. Among the leading characters are William James, Lester Ward, Thorsten Veblen, Herbert Croly, John R. Commons, Henry George, Louis Brandeis, Walter Lippman, Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, Charles Beard, Frederick Jackson Turner, Ezra Pound, and Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Evan S. Connell, *SON OF THE MORNING STAR: CUSTER & THE LITTLE BIGHORN*. Why did it happen? This account of the

heroism and utter foolishness of Custer's "Last Stand" reads like a mystery story.

Joseph Conrad, *LORD JIM*, *HEART OF DARKNESS*, and *NOSTROMO*. I recommend *NOSTROMO* and *HEART OF DARKNESS* as the best of Conrad.

George Crile, *CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR: THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF THE LARGEST COVERT OPERATION IN HISTORY*. I regard this book as one of the most insightful, and most frightening, books on American public administration. Charlie Wilson, an eight-term Democratic Member of the House of Representatives from east Texas, and Gust Avrakotos, a brash veteran CIA clandestine operative, are depicted in an admiring way as running a secret war that spent, not millions, but over a billion dollars, providing advanced military weaponry to the Afghan Mujahideen that Crile contends was instrumental in the defeat of the Russian Army, which retreated in disgrace from Afghanistan in 1989. Wilson was a junior member of two Congressional intelligence subcommittees with the power to provide these funds in secret, and they did so. Wilson's oversized personality and bravado and his international maneuvering in Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt make for an exciting read.

The genius of the America political system is that there are so many of us watching each other (other officials, other branches of government, interest groups, the press, experts, and public opinion writ large). The system is not easy to manipulate precisely because it is so open and we are always second guessing each other. This plethora of checks and balances in person, in print, on the airwaves, and in cyberspace make it very hard (often — too hard) to lead and bring about change. The CIA is disadvantaged in these terms. It lacks this open oversight function intrinsic to American democracy. This is why, in my judgment, President Obama's choice of Leon Panetta to head the CIA is not just something we should accept. It is a brilliant choice. It brings a politically savvy, experienced, and respected leader to the helm, rather than — as critics contend should have been done — appointing, as often

has been done in the past, a professional in the intelligence business

Kenneth S. Davis, *FDR: THE NEW YORK YEARS, 1928-1933*. This book is divided into two parts, "*The Test of Albany*," and "*The Rocky Road to the White House*." His Albany years contained what Davis calls, "the genesis of the New Deal."

Jason DeParle, *AMERICAN DREAM: THREE WOMEN, TEN KIDS, AND A NATION'S DRIVE TO END WELFARE*. DeParle, a senior writer for *The New York Times*, traces the lives of three families in Milwaukee in the heyday of Wisconsin's welfare reform with its strong work focus and work requirements. His decision to look at welfare reform at this human level led him not so much to challenge the work focus of "the new welfare" as to show how hard and complicated it is to implement. Both things about this book — the ground level look and the close attention to implementation (what happens to policies after they are made) — are exactly right by me.

Jared Diamond, *GUNS, GERMS AND STEEL: THE FATES OF HUMAN SOCIETIES*. A book that liberals like, which looks at 13,000 years of history and asks: Why did some nations conquer others? Why didn't the Incas conquer the Spanish? Diamond says authors are regularly asked by journalists to summarize a book in one sentence. For this book, here is his sentence: "History followed different courses for different peoples because of differences among peoples' environments, not because of biological differences among peoples themselves."

Charles Dickens, *HARD TIMES*. This is Dickens' political economy novel, and is my favorite of his books.

David Herbert Donald, *LINCOLN*. Even though you know the story, this is a great read. Donald, the man with three first names, focuses on Lincoln the man, describing him as fatalistic though by no means lethargic. He was, in fact, very ambitious, pragmatic, dedicated to "a strenuous life of aspiration," and yet "reluctant to make bold plans."

Barbara Ehrenreich, *NICKEL AND DIMED: ON (NOT) GETTING BY IN AMERICA*. When I got this book out of the library, I did

not expect to read all of it. I intended to scan it. But I read it and bought copies for people working on our studies of human service programs. The book is a popularized account of the author's experiences working in low-paid jobs — serving (in Florida), scrubbing (in Maine), and selling (at Wal-Mart in Minnesota). Her descriptions of her fellow workers are rich and brisk. The book is a reminder of how many people live. One caveat is that, because Ehrenreich would have had to perjure herself to do so, she could not apply for, and does not describe, food stamps, the earned income tax credit, welfare assistance, or other services and safety-net benefits she would have been eligible for if she really had been living lives like these people she described.

Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *THE AGE OF FEDERALISM: THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC, 1788-1800*. This account of the formative years of the United States reads like a novel, bringing to life the personality, roles, and rivalries of the Founders.

Joseph J. Ellis, *AMERICAN SPHINX: THE CHARACTER OF THOMAS JEFFERSON*. This is a fascinating book that looks at events in Jefferson's life and lets the reader decide: What do you think? Ellis is skeptical about Jefferson's legacy.

Joseph J. Ellis, *PASSIONATE SAGE: THE CHARACTER AND LEGACY OF JOHN ADAMS*. This is Ellis's companion book on the most crotchety of the Founding Fathers, John Adams. It is based on Adams's long correspondence with his adversary, Thomas Jefferson.

James Fallows, *BREAKING THE NEWS: HOW THE MEDIA UNDERMINE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY*. His discussion of "buckrakers" and "spinology" depicts a press that is more interested in money and power than getting at hard-to-treat substantive questions. Although not a new book, the issues Fallows raises are as serious and important now as they were when his book came out in 1996.

John A. Farrell, *TIP O'NEILL AND THE DEMOCRATIC CENTURY*. This is a rich, fast-paced story of the life and times of a big, warm, strong leader in American government, Thomas P.

“Tip” O’Neill, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives for ten years. His story, his jockeying with Ronald Reagan and Newt Gingrich, his warmth, and down-home political smarts are featured. Farrell does a terrific job of jogging our memories about the major national and international events in the years of Tip O’Neill.

David Hackett Fischer, *PAUL REVERE’S RIDE*. It wasn’t like you think. Fischer uses this event to show how the battles of Lexington and Concord came about and the Revolutionary War began.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *THE GREAT GATSBY*. Were the twenties really like this? The book has the contemporary flavor of the life of today’s super rich.

Charles Frazier, *COLD MOUNTAIN*. Young people should read this book. Its great strength is the poignant, insightful way the protagonist vividly sees everything around him on his ill-fated journey home from terrifying, grisly Civil War battles at Cold Harbor, Sharpsburg, Petersburg, and Fredericksburg. Somber, but it is somehow hopeful through it all.

Douglas Southall Freeman, *LEE*. A one-volume abridgment, an elegant book.

Lawrence M. Friedman, *HISTORY OF AMERICAN LAW*. Don’t be put off by the title. This book is an easy and profitable read. Full of useful ideas and facts. Want to know how tort law got to be the way it is?

Thomas L. Friedman, *FROM BEIRUT TO JERUSALEM*. An excellent book about the Middle East in the 1980s.

Thomas L. Friedman, *THE LEXUS AND THE OLIVE TREE: UNDERSTANDING GLOBALIZATION*. Friedman was prescient on the politics of the information age and how they weaken government and strengthen the private sector through the international rule of the “electronic herd” that can outsource businesses anywhere and everywhere with incredible ease. In chapter 5, Friedman describes how the “golden straitjacket of technology” limits the power of national governments.

David Fromkin, *A PEACE TO END ALL PEACE: CREATING THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST, 1914-1922*. A history of the modern Middle East from Gallipoli to the Settlement of 1922.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Cornel West, *THE FUTURE OF RACE*. See Gates's lead essay. Needed, he says, is "...a way of speaking about black advancement that doesn't distort the enduring realities of black poverty."

David Gergen, *EYEWITNESS TO POWER: THE ESSENCE OF LEADERSHIP, NIXON TO CLINTON*. This is an engaging self-analysis of an incredible career of White House responsibilities under four presidents — Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Clinton. Gergen's most penetrating treatments are of his two book-ended presidential-aide experiences, the complex personalities of Nixon and Clinton. There are lots of good stories along the way in this account, which also tells a lot about the author.

Martin Gilbert, *CHURCHILL: A LIFE*. Gilbert was Churchill's official biographer, succeeding Churchill's son, Randolph. This book is a condensation of eight volumes. It is a sympathetic treatment of Churchill's indomitable will, courage, tirelessness, and pure spunk.

Doris Kearns Goodwin, *NO ORDINARY TIME: FRANKLIN & ELEANOR ROOSEVELT — THE HOMEFRONT IN WORLD WAR II*. A vivid account of the lives of FDR and Eleanor during the War years.

Doris Kearns Goodwin, *TEAM OF RIVALS, THE POLITICAL GENIUS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN*. Someone estimated that there are 10,000 books about Abraham Lincoln. This may well be the best of them. Many people have told me that they couldn't put it down, found it to be exciting, and a treasure trove of wonderful insights. The subtitle about Lincoln's political genius is captured in a comment by the author, saying, "It was not simply his ability to gather the best men of the country around him, but to impress upon them his own purpose, perception, and resolution at every juncture."

Stephen Greenblatt, *WILL IN THE WORLD: HOW SHAKESPEARE BECAME SHAKESPEARE*. Greenblatt, a professor of humani-

ties at Harvard, takes a forensic view of what Shakespeare's life might have been like by piecing together what little is known about his life and what is known about the things going on around him. Critics have called it too conjectural. But for me it displays the kind of hard probing that historians have to engage in even when there is not a lot of evidence to go on. My regret is that my limited knowledge of the plays made it hard to pick up some of Greenblatt's clues.

Alan Greenspan, *THE AGE OF TURBULENCE: ADVENTURES IN A NEW WORLD*. His autobiography came out to warm praise as interesting, clear, and readable. But then a reaction took hold. His *laissez faire*, Ayn Rand philosophy is emblematic of what was wrong inside government in the George W. Bush years. "To obtain flexibility," Greenspan said, "the competitive market place must be free to adjust, which means market participants must be free to allocate property as they see fit. Restrictions on pricing, borrowing, affiliations, and market practice more generally [note the weak caveat] have slowed growth." Referring to subprime mortgages, he said, "But, I believed, then, as now, that the benefits of broadened home ownership are worth the risk." He also said that by 2005 he believed the (housing) "boom was over." Mark Zandi, in *FINANCIAL SHOCK: A 360° LOOK AT THE SUBPRIME MORTGAGE IMPLSION AND HOW TO AVOID THE NEXT FINANCIAL CRISIS*, directly challenges Greenspan's assessment. In his book, he sets forth a ten-step program of housing market regulatory and program reforms. While I'm at it, in this year of worldwide financial distress, I recommend Martin Wolf's book, *FIXING GLOBAL FINANCE*. Referring to the regulation of credit markets, Wolf (an editor at the *Financial Times* (London) and professor at the University of Nottingham) says he believes, "Good government is then the foundation of any sophisticated financial system — the base on which the pyramid of promises ultimately stands."

Fred I. Greenstein, *THE PRESIDENTIAL DIFFERENCE: LEADERSHIP STYLE FROM FDR TO CLINTON*. Fred Greenstein's book presents a six-part framework for evaluating modern presidents. Of six factors, the most important, says Greenstein, is what he calls, "*Emotional Intelligence*," which he defines as

“the president’s ability to manage his emotions and turn them to constructive purposes.” Some of Greenstein’s language describing presidents is choice. Johnson, Nixon, Carter, and Clinton, says Greenstein, were “*emotionally handicapped*.” He calls LBJ “Vesuvian,” and describes him as “subject to emotional mood swings of clinical proportions.” Nixon he calls, “the most emotionally flawed” of the presidents he studied: “His anger and suspiciousness were of Shakespearean proportions.”

Paul Grondahl, *MAYOR ERASTUS CORNING: ALBANY ICON, ALBANY ENIGMA*. The O’Connell Democratic machine controlled Albany politics longer than any other old-line city machine, beginning in 1921. Erastus Corning served as mayor for 42 years! This story is rich and real — about power politics close up, which, as Mr. Dooley said, “ain’t beanbag.” A good book to read along with William Kennedy’s *Roscoe* (see below).

Sandra Gulland, *TALES OF PASSION, TALES OF WOE; THE LAST GREAT DANCE ON EARTH*; and *THE MANY LIVES & SECRET SORROWS OF JOSEPHINE B*. This is actually a trilogy in the form of a fast-paced historical-fictional account of the life of Josephine Bonaparte. It is presented as her diary. Based on Gulland’s extensive study of those turbulent times, it makes you wonder: “Was it really like this?” The treatment is lively, juicy, and plausible. All the characters are there; their lives and actions are personalized — Royalists, Republicans, Radicals.

David Halberstam, *THE MAKING OF A QUAGMIRE*. His coverage for *The New York Times* of the War in Vietnam in 1962-63 when he was 29 years old won him a Pulitzer Prize. This book, which recounts how bad he thought the situation was, has the special sharpness of new authorship. The dangers of foreign entanglements are brought to life in the experiences of a reporter in the field, under fire in the Delta, forming and relying on friendships with people caught up in this fateful war. I often buy bags of books at used-book sales and figure that if I read one of them I’m ahead of the game. This book was such a find.

Learned Hand, *THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY*. Former Michigan Governor William Milliken suggested these essays to me. It is a collection that tells about the life of an outstanding jurist (born in

Albany, New York, by the way) whose views on the American experience and the importance of tolerance to public civility make it worthwhile to buy this old book, which I did, used, on *Amazon.com*. The editor is Irving Dilliard.

Thomas Hardy, *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE*. I'd like to revisit books like this that made a strong impression on me a long time ago.

Roy Harrod, *THE LIFE OF JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES*. Harrod, a colleague of Keynes, is a good storyteller.

Robert Heilbroner, *THE WORLDLY PHILOSOPHERS*. This book describes the lives and work of the great economists. Not a new book, but a very good one.

Gertrude Himmelfarb, *THE IDEA OF POVERTY*. This is the story of social conditions and government in 18th and 19th century England from the poor house to the Poor Law. Himmelfarb's ideas influenced not just other members of her distinguished family, but many prominent opinion leaders as social policies shifted in the 1980s.

Adam Hochschild, *KING LEOPOLD'S GHOST*. Leopold never set foot in a land he pilfered. Reread Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, afterwards to feel the horror of the Congo. Conrad appears in Hochschild's book, which recounts his steaming up the Congo.

Richard Hofstadter, *THE AGE OF REFORM*. There are few better books on progressivism in America. The period covered is 1890 to 1940.

Richard Hofstadter, *SOCIAL DARWINISM IN AMERICAN THOUGHT*. This book focuses on a period and thinking often left out of American history — the high-flying post-Civil War years of rapid industrial development and political and social conservatism.

Alistair Horne, *HOW FAR FROM AUSTERLITZ?: NAPOLEON 1805-1815*. A fine account of Napoleon's greatest victory to his downfall at Waterloo.

William Dean Howells, *THE RISE OF SILAS LAPHAM*. Try a little Howells.

Robert H. Jackson, *THAT MAN: AN INSIDER'S PORTRAIT OF FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT*. St. John's University law professor, Jon Barrett "discovered" Jackson's unfinished manuscript and put it in book form. It is an intimate account by New York Upstater Robert Jackson, Roosevelt's friend and attorney general, who later served on the U.S. Supreme Court. One thing it shows is how situational political appointments are. Bill Clinton went to grade school with Vince Foster and his chief-of-staff, Mark McLarty. FDR was much taken with Jackson, a western New York political leader in his rise to power in New York. They were very close over several decades, which is what makes Jackson's book an interesting read.

André Jardin, Robert Hemenway, and Lydia Davis, *TOCQUEVILLE: A BIOGRAPHY*. Tocqueville went to America to restart his political career — and in the process to get away from it all in France. He ended up making a great contribution to literature and history through his writing about the nine months ostensibly spent studying prisons in America in 1831 and 1832. Tocqueville correctly believed the American institutions thus formed a complex system— one of interlocking wheels, and wheels within wheels, in which the direct line of command of a centralized regime was not to be found.

Henry James, *WASHINGTON SQUARE*. Also suggested, *THE AMBASSADORS*.

Paul Johnson, *MODERN TIMES*. This history is told from a prickly conservative point of view. It is full of rich anecdotes and is very hard hitting.

John Keane, *TOM PAINE: A POLITICAL LIFE*. Tom Paine lived an extraordinary and wild life — a friend then foe of George Washington, a member of the French Assembly during the Revolution, and almost guillotined. He knew Napoleon, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Edmund Burke, and wrote what were arguably the three most influential essays of the eighteenth century — *Common Sense*, *The Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason*.

William Kennedy, *BILLY PHELAN'S GREATEST GAME*. This book by Kennedy is my favorite among his Albany books.

William Kennedy, *ROSCOE*. Roscoe Owen Conway, the protagonist in this novel, is secretary and second in command of the Democratic Party (a.k.a. the O'Connell machine) in the mythical city in which this book takes place (actually Albany). Most of what happens is seen through Conway's cagey eyes as both an operator and observer. At one point, Roscoe wonders,

Since when has truth been a political virtue? ... power is based in the deep comprehension and perverse love of deception, especially self-deception, and any man who seeks power through truth is either a fool or a loser.

Unfortunately William Kennedy's harsh world view rings true for the political arena he knew well and covered as a reporter in his early career.

Ralph Ketcham, *JAMES MADISON*. Ketcham's book is a full (somewhat too full) and yet good treatment of the life of a brilliant man, who was much more successful as a political philosopher than as president. Madison is my American hero; his governance design, more so his than anyone else's, is a modern political wonder of balance, realism, and hope.

Richard M. Ketchum, *SARATOGA: TURNING POINT OF AMERICA'S REVOLUTIONARY WAR*. The plan was for British generals Burgoyne and Howe to meet in Albany and split the colonies. It might have been different if they had. Ketchum tells the story of why they didn't connect up.

Barbara Kingsolver, *THE POISONWOOD BIBLE*. This book is a hard epic of the lives of a missionary family in the Congo/Zaire. It is told in the alternating voices of a mother and four daughters. The villain is the Baptist minister father, Nathan Price, who is described in all five voices — mother's and daughters'. Nathan's sin of self-righteousness is powerful and destructive.

Russell Kirk, *THE CONSERVATIVE MIND FROM BURKE TO SANTAYANA*. Written in 1953, this hard-hitting, vibrant book states the case for conservatism in a way that makes one think hard.

Joe Klein, *PRIMARY COLORS: A NOVEL OF POLITICS*. In 1996, I listed this book under "A" as being written by Anonymous, but I never had doubts about who wrote it. It is almost a word-for-word fictionalization of Klein's *New York Magazine* accounts of Bill Clinton's experiences in the 1992 presidential primaries.

Richard Kluger, *SIMPLE JUSTICE*. A history of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954, the school desegregation case.

Adrienne Koch, *JEFFERSON AND MADISON: THE GREAT COLLABORATION*. Here's another bargain book (50 cents at the Albany Public Library's weekly book sale). Published in 1964, it is a forgotten classic of American government. Jefferson and Madison, two close collaborators (both intellectually and politically) took over the government in 1800. Madison was Jefferson's secretary of state and successor. The "Republican Ascendancy" proceeded in a way that is not unusual in American politics; it took over the aims and ideas of its predecessors. Madison said there are three fundamental governmental forms. Military despotisms ("under which human nature has groaned through every age"); money despotisms, which mask themselves under an apparent liberty, but rely upon an army of interested partisans to defend the domination of the few over the freedom of the many; and republican governments, "which it is the glory of America to have invented, and her unrivaled happiness to possess." I worry a lot in these times about this second form — "money despotism."

Jerzy Kosinski, *BEING THERE*. This is a funny and compelling novel about the world of spin doctors, TV spots, and glib politics. I also liked Kosinski's *THE PAINTED BIRD*.

David Lamb, *THE AFRICANS*. This highly readable, though dated, book provides perspective on the grim conditions and prospects of sub-Saharan Africa. I read it in 1999 when I was going to go to Uganda, but the trip never came off.

Margaret Leech, *IN THE DAYS OF MCKINLEY*. McKinley had his heart set on retiring to Canton, Ohio. Said Leech: "In all America there was no mansion so fine and costly that it compared in

McKinley's mind with the snug cottage on North Market Street," from which he campaigned for and won the presidency in 1896. But it was not to be. Leech closes by saying: "The nation felt another leadership, nervous, aggressive and strong. Under command of a bold young captain, America set sail on the stormy voyage of the twentieth century."

Nicholas Lemann, *THE PROMISED LAND: THE GREAT BLACK MIGRATION AND HOW IT CHANGED AMERICA*. An account of the effects of the mechanization of cotton picking on the lives of black Americans and on national social policy. Lemann's treatment of policymaking in Washington in the sixties and seventies is exceptional.

John Lewis with Michael D'Orso, *WALKING WITH THE WIND: A MEMOIR OF THE MOVEMENT*. Lewis, a Member of Congress from Georgia, was at the center of the hottest civil rights battles of the sixties. His compelling and dramatic personal account of what he experienced, said the *Chicago Tribune*, "doubles as a primer on the 1960s civil rights movement."

Michael Lewis, *LIAR'S POKER*. On greed on Wall Street as seen by a young Princeton-trained investment banker.

Michael Lewis, *THE NEW NEW THING: A SILICON VALLEY STORY*. This book is a fast-paced account of the life of Jim Clark, founder of three consecutive billion-dollar e-commerce blockbusters, the most famous of which was Netscape. Michael Lewis tells the story of this impresario of the information age in a way that shows the profound changes that occurred.

Sinclair Lewis, *MAIN STREET*. Also recommended by Sinclair Lewis, *IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE*.

Machiavelli, *THE PRINCE*. Lots to ponder here. For example, "A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good. Therefore, it is necessary to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case."

Nelson Mandela, *LONG WALK TO FREEDOM*. I'm not a fan of autobiographies because they are often too self-serving. But

Mandela wins over the reader. He spent twenty-six years in prison and captured his captors with extraordinary political savvy and great human decency.

Robert Massie, *PETER THE GREAT*. This in fact is one of my favorite biographies. Also recommended by Massie — *NICHOLAS AND ALEXANDRA*.

Garrett Mattingly, *THE ARMADA*. Reads like a novel on the shaping European military event of the 16th century, the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

David McCullough, *JOHN ADAMS*. McCullough has a way of falling in love with his subjects, in this case even more with Abigail Adams than with John Adams. Gordon Wood in *The New York Review of Books* said of McCullough that he is America's greatest historical popularizer. This book reads like a romantic novel, and is a wonderful tribute, not just to Adams, but to the Founders.

David McCulloch, *TRUMAN*. Here again, McCulloch became increasingly and warmly admiring of his subject. "Sweeping and vivid," said one reviewer. It is a big book (1,100 pages). Truman's qualities of modesty and historical perspective, rare among politicians, stand out in this.

Forrest McDonald, *STATES RIGHTS AND THE UNION: IMPERIUM IN IMPERIO, 1776-1876*. An outstanding treatment of states' rights in the first century of American federalism, and a highly readable account of the period covered.

William McFeely, *GRANT*. A favorite biography of mine about a complicated man. Grant himself was a fine writer.

James McPherson, *BATTLE CRY OF FREEDOM: THE CIVIL WAR ERA*. Lucid and comprehensive. This is my choice for best book on the Civil War period, winner of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize. Don't miss it.

Louis Menand, *THE METAPHYSICAL CLUB: A STORY OF IDEAS IN AMERICA*. Menand, who writes frequently and eclectically in *The New Yorker*, now teaches at Harvard. His book is not an easy read, but is a significant book. It is about the ideas and lives of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., William James, and John

Dewey, who, says Menand, “dominated American intellectual life for half a century,” during the period from the Civil War to the early twentieth century. Menand portrays the works of his subjects as a philosophical movement and describes their lives and times. (There actually was a Metaphysical Club in Cambridge to which these men belonged.) The central ideas are toleration, pragmatism, and pluralism — core values, though not always respected, of American thought. Holmes has a starring role. He had, says Menand, “a knee-jerk suspicion of causes.” He thought “socialism was a silly doctrine.” In his acknowledgments, Menand says writing this book was “almost fatally fascinating and (this is something I never thought I would say about writing a book) I am sorry it is over.” I was sorry too.

Dick Morris, *BEHIND THE OVAL OFFICE: WINNING THE PRESIDENCY IN THE NINETIES*. You may be surprised that I list this probably highly fictional account by Dick Morris. Despite his self-flagellating account of his downfall with a prostitute, Morris spins a fascinating story of his close relationship with Bill Clinton, planning strategy for the 1996 Presidential election. His memoir reveals a disturbing shallowness in American high politics. He shines a bright light on the ubiquitousness of fund raising. The book is not a mystery story, but it’s scary anyway.

Edmund Morris, *THE RISE OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT*. Tough guy, amazing life, a good book, though not as good as the sequel listed next.

Edmund Morris, *THEODORE REX*. According to Morris, “strenuous moderation” was TR’s political credo. He was a centrist (favoring national over state action) and something of a jingoist. Morris writes about Roosevelt’s life as president with flourishes and panache. Sometimes it is a bit much, but the overall effect is great. “A smart, fascinating, witty, and well paced book” is what I wrote in the flyleaf.” I also wrote, “TR was a political phenomenon, closest in energy to LBJ, but with totally different roots and a totally different intellectual mindset.”

James Morris, *HEAVEN’S COMMAND, PAX BRITANNICA, and FAREWELL THE TRUMPETS*. A triptych on the rise and de-

cline of the British Empire. The series begins with Queen Victoria's ascension and ends with Churchill's death.

Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, *THREE CUPS OF TEA: ONE MAN'S MISSION TO PROMOTE PEACE ... ONE SCHOOL AT A TIME*. A heartrending story of a brave man. Read it along with *CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR*. My reaction to both books is how frustratingly hard it is to change cultures.

Charles Murray, *LOSING GROUND: AMERICAN SOCIAL POLICY, 1950-1980*. There is an old joke: Someone asks do you know such-and-such a book, and the answer is, "Yes, but not personally." To understand what has happened to U.S. social policy in the mid 1980s and 1990s, you have to know this book personally.

Sylvia Nasar, *A BEAUTIFUL MIND*. I saw the movie and then read the book. It uses what might have been a hallucination of John Nash's as the basis for the film. I remember seeing Nash at Princeton, and I heard him speak once at a seminar. John Nash was a brilliant mathematician. The story of his schizophrenia is the focus of Nasar's book. Nash won a Nobel Prize late in life for his discoveries in game theory. This book is heavy going in describing game theory, as well it should be, but worth the effort. Read it in your most alert hours.

David Nasaw, *THE CHIEF: THE LIFE OF WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST*. Now here was a *BIG* man. He wanted it all, and got a lot of it. He won an election as mayor of New York, only to have victory snatched from him by the Tweed Ring. He wanted to be president. His relations with both presidential Roosevelts are worth the price of admission to this story. Hearst resented TR getting closer than him to combat in Cuba. (Hearst tried, and did get shot at as a correspondent there.) As the nation's leading Democratic publisher, he sparred with FDR, who ultimately bested him and kept him in his place. He lived with Marion Davies for more than three decades, and yet maintained his wife, Millicent (a former chorus girl), and their family (five sons) in luxury and in a dignified relationship all through this period.

Peggy Noonan, *WHAT I SAW AT THE REVOLUTION: A POLITICAL LIFE IN THE REAGAN ERA*. She wrote this book in sound bites and captured the politics of spin doctors for better or worse — mostly for worse.

Sheldon Novick, *HONORABLE JUSTICE*. The life of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., “the great dissenter.” He revolutionized the law, stressing the law as experience.

Edwin O’Connor, *THE LAST HURRAH*. Mayor Curley’s Boston machine in fine fictional form.

Richard Overy, *RUSSIA’S WAR: A HISTORY OF THE SOVIET WAR EFFORT, 1941– 1945*. I guess I’m a glutton for punishment. I was also moved by this World War II book. It is a vivid and well-honed argument about how the lives of 25 million Soviet soldiers and civilians killed on Russian soil was the decisive factor in assuring an Allied victory.

Thomas Pakenham, *THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA: WHITE MAN’S CONQUEST OF THE DARK CONTINENT FROM 1876 TO 1912*. We need to understand this sad story. The greatest villain is King Leopold II of Belgium, the founder and the *owner* of the Congo.

Joseph E. Persico, *11TH MONTH, 11TH DAY, 11TH HOUR: ARMISTICE DAY, 1918, WORLD WAR I AND ITS VIOLENT CLIMAX*. Persico’s theme is how the killing continued after the World War I Armistice was agreed to right up to the final minute it was to take effect. This caused huge and unnecessary additional casualties that, said Persico, “perfectly capture the essential futility of the entire war.” His stories about the men in the trenches are poignant and chilling.

Joseph E. Persico, *FRANKLIN AND LUCY: PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT, MRS. RUTHERFORD AND THE OTHER REMARKABLE WOMEN IN HIS LIFE*. Persico’s new book is about Lucy Rutherford and other women important in the life of FDR. It adds useful insights to the literature on FDR, the focus of the lead essay in this year’s book list. If you like movies, you should rent the HBO movie *Warm Springs* about FDR’s coura-

geous fight against polio starring Kenneth Branagh, who presents an uncanny portrayal of FDR.

Joseph E. Persico. *ROOSEVELT'S SECRET WAR: FDR AND WORLD WAR II ESPIONAGE*. Persico's account of U.S. espionage during World War II describes Franklin Roosevelt's close, personal, and manipulative involvement in this aspect of the war. The book is chock full of great stories.

Merrill D. Peterson, *THE GREAT TRIUMVIRATE: WEBSTER, CLAY, AND CALHOUN*. This book about Congressional politics in the 19th century is a reminder that dominant leaders of this period, with few exceptions, were members of Congress.

Nathaniel Philbrick, *MAYFLOWER: A STORY OF COURAGE, COMMUNITY, AND WAR*. This is a rich, wonderful history. I read it in November. The Pilgrims "stumbled on the power of capitalism" but were not able to achieve any long-term success. Relations with the Indians and the story of the savagery and terrible legacy of the King Phillips War bring legends into the real world.

Colin Powell, with Joseph E. Persico, *MY AMERICAN JOURNEY*. The book is a sensitive, smooth-flowing story of the pre-secretarial life of a man of dignity. Powell comes through as someone you would like and trust. I judge him, too, by the fact that my neighbor, Joe Persico, who wrote this book with General Powell, came away from the experience with a glowing account of the way he worked with and was treated by Powell. I wonder if there will be a sequel, *THE JOURNEY CONTINUED*.

Arthur Quinn, *A NEW WORLD: AN EPIC OF COLONIAL AMERICA FROM THE FOUNDING OF JAMESTOWN TO THE FALL OF QUEBEC*. This is an elegant book that blends history and poetry in hard-edged stories of our Colonial past. George Will said of this book, and he's right — "Prose that sings and crackles ... a scrumptious reminder of the pleasures of historical writing that rises to the level of literature." This book was given to me by Frank Thompson.

A. James Reichley, *FAITH IN POLITICS*. This book, used in the 2004 introductory essay, is a fine history of the role of religion in American political life.

Robert H. Reid, *ARCHITECTS OF THE WEB: 1,000 DAYS THAT BUILT THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS*. The best book I know on the development of the Internet. The amazing thing is that it all happened so fast.

William L. Riordon, *PLUNKITT OF TAMMANY HALL: A SERIES OF VERY PLAIN TALKS ON VERY PRACTICAL POLITICS*. A classic that shouldn't be missed by students of American politics, given to me by Bob Ward. Said Plunkitt:

The fact is that a reformer can't last in politics. He can make a show for a while, but he always comes down like a rocket. Politics are as much a regular business as the grocery, the dry goods or the drug business. You've got to be trained up to it or you're sure to fail.

Plunkitt, a nineteenth century New York City ward leader, state legislator, and political boss, recounted the secrets of machine politics to Riordan, who assembled them in this book in 1905.

J.M. Roberts, *THE PENGUIN HISTORY OF THE WORLD*. This is a perennial on my list. It ranks as one of the best books I have read. Roberts, an Oxford historian, wrote a textbook on world history for an American publisher, and then decided to try his hand at a readable narrative for a lay audience. His well-written, flowing, sometimes almost whimsical, history of the world from the ice age to the modern age is a *tour de force*. This is a good book to revisit to set important periods and events in history.

Tina Rosenberg, *THE HAUNTED LAND: FACING EUROPE'S GHOSTS AFTER COMMUNISM*. Published in 1995 and winner of a Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction. A good way to select books is to buy books that win Pulitzer Prizes in history, nonfiction, or biography. Have them around and pick them up when you're in the mood. This is what happened to me with this book, which is a thought-provoking account of how four East European satellites adjusted to the end of the Soviet Em-

pire. The four countries are the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and East Germany. The author focuses on the lives of people across the social spectrum.

Helen Hooven Santmyer, ... *AND LADIES OF THE CLUB*. A period piece about life in the Midwest in the 1880s, the heyday of Republican presidents from that region. Written late in life by Santmyer from first-hand experiences. Has conviction and authenticity.

Jeff Shesol, *MUTUAL CONTEMPT: LYNDON JOHNSON, ROBERT KENNEDY, AND THE FEUD THAT DEFINED A DECADE*. This feature book for 2003 gives you a lot to think about. Life at the top in American politics is intense and often mean. Corporate life, of course, is no picnic. But high politics is always and especially rough and tumble. Johnson and Robert Kennedy had a virtual hatred for each other that went back to the 1960 Democratic Convention. Kennedy gets the better treatment. Johnson in the final analysis is portrayed as paranoid as war pressures mounted, leading to his dramatic announcement in March 1968 that he would not stand for re-election. Kennedy's metamorphosis and growth, as portrayed by Shesol, makes one wonder what things would have been like had he run for president and won in 1968. I particularly took note of, and agreed with, what the author had to say about the Kerner Commission (on Civil Disorders) for which I was a staff member.

The Democratic disaffected had lost faith in LBJ, despite all he had done or tried to do, and he had lost faith in them. He took their attraction to Kennedy as a deeply personal affront. Consumed by the war and bitterly resentful of black "subversives," Johnson effectively cut poverty and civil rights from his agenda. By 1967, he spoke less of hope and progress than of safe streets and crime control — "euphemisms," scoffed Pat Moynihan, "for the forcible repression of black violence." When the President's Commission on Civil Disorders proposed a range of "traditional" policies to quiet urban unrest, LBJ refused even to read the report.

Robert A. Slayton, *EMPIRE STATESMAN: THE RISE AND REDEMPTION OF AL SMITH*. This rich story includes the public vilification of Smith when he ran for president in 1928, his

love-hate relationship with FDR, and his joining the Liberty League to get even with FDR (repudiating everything Smith stood for as governor), the early years in Tammany Hall and on the East Side of New York City.

Gene Smith, *WHEN THE CHEERING STOPPED*. The fascinating story of Woodrow Wilson's years of illness. His wife, Edith Bolling Wilson, carried out an extraordinary cover-up.

Dava Sobel, *GALILEO'S DAUGHTER: A HISTORICAL MEMOIR OF SCIENCE, FAITH, AND LOVE*. Based on letters from Galileo's daughter, a nun, to her father. (His letters to her are lost.) It is a sensitive story of how science advances. Galileo's invention of the telescope and his discovery of sunspots led him to decide and prove that Copernicus was right—and in 1633 he was excommunicated for doing so.

Ronald Steele, *WALTER LIPPMANN AND THE AMERICAN CENTURY*. You'll learn a lot from this intelligent book.

John Steinbeck, *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*. Another book to revisit.

Irving Stone, *THE ORIGIN*. About Charles Darwin. He only left home once, but that was some big adventure. This is an account of Darwin's life and a good read.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*. This book had an immense effect on public opinion in the North and on American history.

Jonathan Swift, *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*. I often reread *Gulliver's Travels* to try to imagine how Swift's satire about the irrationality of human society three centuries ago would treat today's vanities: Tiny people permanently attached to keyboards, a country where social prestige and material rewards are based on sexual activity. One of my favorites among Swift's adventures, although certainly not a cheerful one, is his visit to Luggnagg and his description of the misery of the people who live forever, the Struldbrugs, who have a red circular spot on their forehead and whom everyone avoids. Their misery "arose from the dreadful prospect of never dying.... [T]hey never can amuse themselves with reading, because their memory will not serve to carry them from the beginning of a sen-

tence to the end; and by this Defect they are deprived of the only Entertainment whereof they might otherwise be capable." But best of all is the Academy of Lagado where professors are so engaged in abstractions that "the whole country lies in miserable waste."

Alan Taylor, *WILLIAM COOPER'S TOWN: POWER AND PERSUASION ON THE FRONTIER OF THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC*. In the years after the American Revolution, the frontier was western New York, and William Cooper was one of the most aggressive speculator-developers in the region. His son, James Fenimore Cooper, wrote a fictional and not very charitable account of his father's life, *The Pioneers*. Historian Alan Taylor weaves the real story and the novel into a fascinating Pulitzer Prize-winning account of two generations.

John M. Taylor, *WILLIAM HENRY SEWARD: LINCOLN'S RIGHT HAND*. The old story, and it is true, is that Governor Seward of New York, as Lincoln's secretary of state, decided that Lincoln should be a titular ruler and that he (Seward) should do the heavy lifting. One month after Lincoln was inaugurated, Seward wrote a famous memorandum to him, "*Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration*," in which he effectively said, things are going badly, let me take charge. (This is sometimes referred to as the "*The April Fool's Day Paper*.") Lincoln responded, "Whatever must be done, I must do it." Though secret until 1890, this exchange of memos put Seward in his place. Thereafter, he came to be Lincoln's closest associate and confidant. Basically a moderate, Seward fell out with the Radical Republicans in the Congress (he had previously been one as a Member of the Senate), and ended his political career trying to save Andrew Johnson's presidency. When Lincoln was assassinated, there was an attempt on Seward's life, which failed, and led to a rumination by him years later to New York political boss Thurlow Weed, suggesting that he, Seward, would have been better remembered had the attempt on his life succeeded. Oh well, such is life — or maybe that's the wrong metaphor.

Leo Tolstoy, *WAR AND PEACE*. This is my favorite novel and one of my favorite books. The high point in the lives of Tolstoy's principal characters is the Battle of Borodino in 1812, the town

in Russia where Napoleon was forced to turn tail when his armies fell away and fell apart in winter retreat. Tolstoy contrasted Napoleon, who knew what he was deciding and thought it mattered, with the old and physically failing Russian General Kututzov. Kututzov, said Tolstoy, was reconciled to "intangible force ... he took cognizance of that force and guided it insofar as it lay in his power," whereas, "it only seemed to Napoleon that it all took place by his will."

Barbara W. Tuchman, *THE GUNS OF AUGUST*. A famous book about the origins of World War I.

Barbara W. Tuchman, *THE PROUD TOWER: A PORTRAIT OF THE WORLD BEFORE THE WAR, 1890-1914*. This book, the precursor in time to *The Guns of August*, was written after it. The title is from Edgar Allan Poe, "While from a proud tower in the town, Death looks gigantically down."

Voltaire, *CANDIDE*. Read it again.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE* is a classic about the fire bombing of Dresden, and in my opinion is Vonnegut's best. Also recommended from Vonnegut — *PLAYER PIANO*.

Edith Wharton, *THE AGE OF INNOCENCE*.

Michael White and John Gribbin, *EINSTEIN: A LIFE IN SCIENCE*. Quantum physics is grounded in "the uncertainty principle" about the behavior of subatomic particles — which should make us social scientists feel a little bit better about ourselves. Einstein spent his waning years forlornly seeking "a general theory," and being shunned by some colleagues for his fixation on doing so.

William Allen White, *THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE*. White was a prominent American journalist and editor in the first part of the twentieth century. "What's the matter with Kansas?" The answer — nothing. He also wrote *PURITAN IN BABYLON*, a biography of Calvin Coolidge.

Oscar Wilde, *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*.

T. Harry Williams, *HUEY LONG*. I bought this used book for \$1.00 to send to my son who then lived in New Orleans. I read it too.

Huey Long was bigger than life — incredibly brash, and at the same time dangerous. His “Share Our Wealth” scheme swept the country, pushing FDR and the New Deal to the left. Governor and then Senator Huey Long aimed to be president. Franklin Roosevelt treated him with kid gloves, once telling associates that Long on the left and Douglas MacArthur on the right were the greatest dangers for despotism in America. This book by T. Harry Williams, a professor at Louisiana State University, takes a while to get going. There is too much in it about Long’s early life. But once Long gets into politics, the book soars.

James Q. Wilson, *BUREAUCRACY: WHAT GOVERNMENT AGENCIES DO AND WHY THEY DO IT*. The best book on this subject in my opinion — candid, insightful, readable.

Harris Wofford, *OF KENNEDYS & KINGS: MAKING SENSE OF THE SIXTIES*. Harris Wofford writes with convincing authority as a candid first-hand observer of events in the 1960s. He knew and admired Gandhi’s nonviolence movement, was a friend and advisor to Martin Luther King, Jr., walked with King, served as a campaign aide to John F. Kennedy in 1960, was Kennedy’s White House aide for civil rights, was a close associate of Sargent Shriver (especially in the latter’s role in founding the Peace Corps), and served as a U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania. Bill Moyers in the Foreword to this book says Wofford’s “has been the most principled life I’ve followed over the years.” Wofford is best known for his role in getting Senator John F. Kennedy to make his famous phone call to Coretta Scott King when Rev. King was jailed in Atlanta in October 1960 and she feared for his life.

Thomas Wolfe, *YOU CAN’T GO HOME AGAIN*.

Tom Wolfe, *A MAN IN FULL*. I resisted this book when it came out, but when I got into it I found it compelling. His satire is Swiftian. Among the targets — college football, bankers, politicians, prisons, the underclass, and big city developers.

Tom Wolfe, *RADICAL CHIC AND MAU-MAUING THE FLAK CATCHERS AND THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES*. Rich satire about the 1960s and 1980s.

Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong, *THE BRETHERN: INSIDE THE SUPREME COURT*. An insider view of the Burger Court. My bet is that these kinds of personal dynamics reflect what still goes on.

Richard Wright, *NATIVE SON*. A book that shaped attitudes in the fifties about race in America.

Malcolm X, *THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X*. An important life and a crackling book.

Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw, *THE COMMANDING HEIGHTS: THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE MARKETPLACE THAT IS REMAKING THE MODERN WORLD*. An essay about how globalization and privatization have reduced the role of governments. See the note above about Thomas Friedman's *THE LEXUS AND THE OLIVE TREE*.

William Zinsser, *ON WRITING WELL*. This book appropriately comes at the end of the list each year. It is the best book to read about how to do your own good writing. I have given copies to lots of students and refer to it often. Here are two gems from Zinsser:

Very few sentences come out right the first time, or even the third time. Remember this as a consolation in moments of despair. If you find that writing is hard, it's because it is hard. It's one of the hardest things that people do.

Look for the clutter in your writing and prune it ruthlessly. Be grateful for everything you can throw away. Reexamine each sentence that you put on paper. Is every word doing new work? Can any thought be expressed with more economy? Is anything pompous or pretentious or faddish? Are you hanging on to something useless just because you think it's beautiful?

Special thanks to Michele Charbonneau, Michael Cooper, Mary Nathan, Irene Pavone, David Shaffer, Heather Trela, and Robert Ward for helping me prepare this Book List.

RULES FOR REGULAR READERS

1. Decide what type of books you like best. For me, it's history and biographies. One of my pet peeves is we don't teach students enough history.
 2. Rule No. 2 is especially important:
If you don't like a book, don't finish it. Never force yourself to read a book you aren't enjoying.
 3. Read each day, even if only for half an hour.
 4. Buy a lot of books. Used books are the best. Mark them up. A good system is to underline the parts you like, and note the page numbers up front. Take possession of your books!
 5. Another good rule is that if a book is more than thirty years old and you've heard about it, you should try it.
 6. Don't watch too much TV. Groucho Marx once said, "TV is good for me, because every time someone turns it on I go and read a book."
-

The Rockefeller Institute of Government, founded in 1981, is known for expertise on the finances and management of American state and local governments and the characteristics and dynamics of U.S. federalism. The Institute is the public policy research arm of the State University of New York.

The emphasis of the Institute's work is on "*action research*" — studies that are useful and used in government. We pride ourselves in being independent and objective. Our role is to educate — not advocate. The Institute gives special attention to projects and activities for governments and nonprofit organizations in New York State.



**THE NELSON A.
ROCKEFELLER
INSTITUTE
OF GOVERNMENT**

State University of New York
411 State Street,
Albany, New York 12203-1003
www.rockinst.org