

# Honors College

## Spring 2024 Reading Groups

Groups will begin third week of classes.  
January 30th-February 3rd

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# About the Program

Each semester, the Honors College sponsors the Informal Reading Program. The groups, composed of 10 to 15 participants and a moderator from the Honors College faculty, staff or student body, meet once a week to discuss their chosen book. The books cover a wide range of topics, and most have been recommended by Honors College students. This is a great chance to meet and connect with other students that share similar interests. The groups are open to all OU students, not just Honors College members.

To participate, the only commitment is that each student make a good-faith effort to do the reading and come to the group meeting as often as possible. The goal of the program is to offer participants “maximum information and enjoyment, without stress which is why the program features no quizzes, no fees, and no grades. All books will be provided free of charge.

To sign up for a reading group, scan the QR code below or click the link in this program. Groups are limited to 15 people, and sign-ups are made on a first-come basis.

Spring 2024 reading groups will be conducted in person and will begin meeting the week of January 30- February 3rd, 2024. Participants and moderators can pick up their books during the first group meeting that week.

Forget the day, time, or meeting place of a group? Use this brochure to verify this information. If you are having trouble finding the information, or find any of the information to be incorrect, please send us an email at [honorsreading@ou.edu](mailto:honorsreading@ou.edu)

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# Featured Books

**Beach Read by Emily Henry**  
Moderated by Evan Jones

**Brave New World by Aldous Huxley**  
Moderated by Daniel Shamsee & Lena Jurik

**Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut**  
Moderated by Sam Hunt

**Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky**  
Moderated by Justice Neasbitt

**Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions by Edwin A. Abbot**  
Moderated by: Bria Farmer & Chloe Prazinko

**Hallowe'en Party by Agatha Christie**  
Moderated by Crystal Hollen

**Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams**  
Moderated by Robel Tesfaselassie

**Persuasion by Jane Austen**  
Moderated by Danielle Crutfield, Alexa Dringus, Xotchil Hidalgo

**Prophet Song by Paul Lynch**  
Moderated by Brian Johnson

**Six of Crows by Leigh Bardugo**  
Moderated by Alexandria Wilson

**The Gulag Archipelago Vol. I by Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn**  
Moderated by Caleb Xan Anagnos

**The Gunslinger by Stephen King**  
Moderated by Evan Jones

**The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe by C.S Lewis**  
Moderated by Preston Vitosh and Teddy Winter

**Now is Not the Time to Panic**  
Moderated by Imelda Aldava

**The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down by Anne Fadiman**  
Moderated by Vignesh Anand

**Unmasking AI by Joy Buolamwini**  
Moderated by Julianna Kershen

**Scythe by Neil Schusterman**  
Moderated by Nolen Jackson



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## **Hallowe'en Party by Agatha Christie**

**Moderator: Crystal Hollen**

**Mondays at 10 am for 8 weeks**

Hallowe'en Party, also published under the name "A Murder in Venice," is an intriguing novel written by one of the most brilliant mystery fiction writers of the last century. The novel includes one of her most famous characters, detective Hercule Poirot, who must figure out the mysterious goings on in the ancient city of Venice: the sinister plots of a killer, or if something more ethereal is at play. Join us as we immerse ourselves in this chilling story of murder and

## **Persuasion by Jane Austen**

**Moderators: Danielle Crutchfield, Alexa Dringus, Xochitl Hidalgo**

**Mondays at 1pm for 6 weeks**

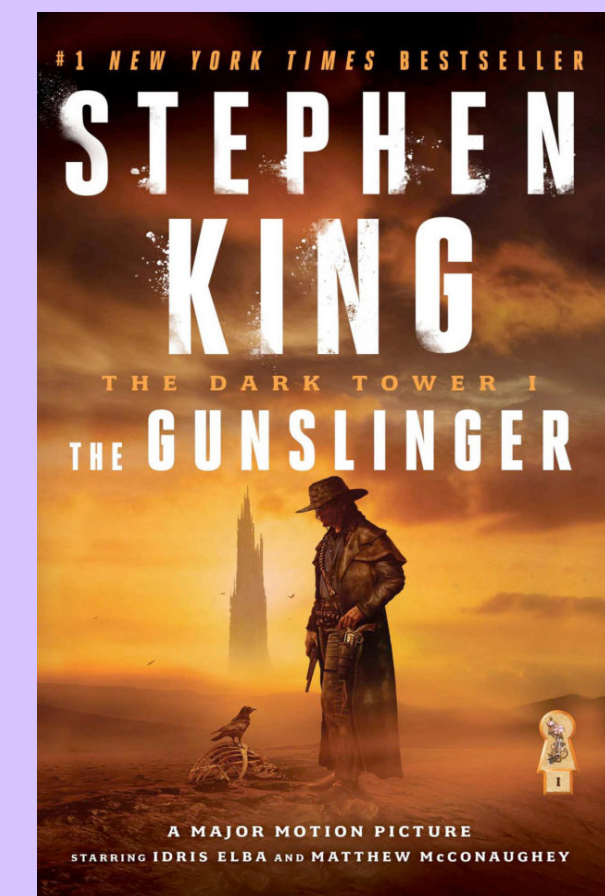
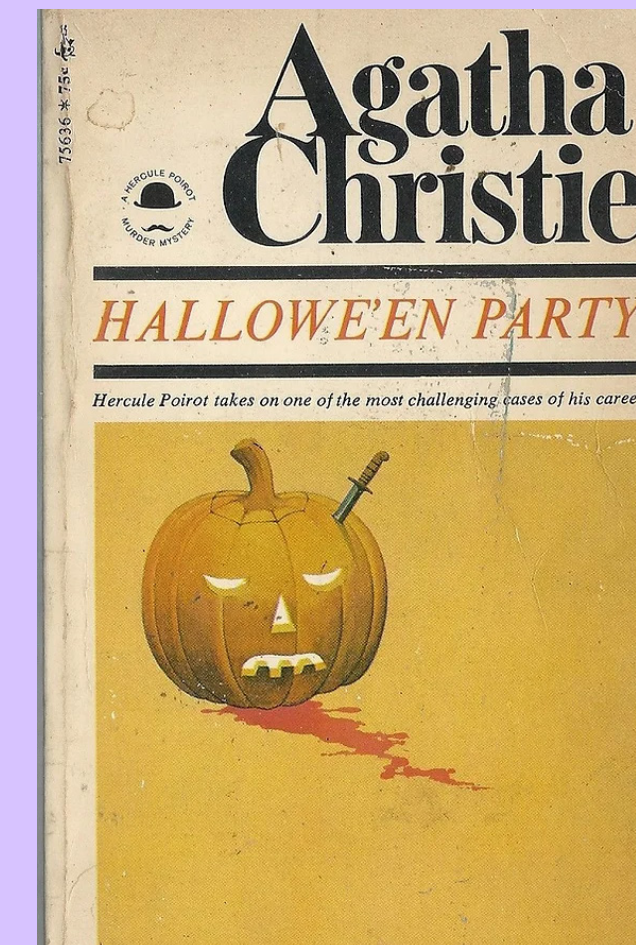
The story concerns Anne Elliot, a young Englishwoman of twenty-seven years, whose family moves to a smaller estate to reduce their expenses and reduce their debt by renting their home to an Admiral and his wife. The wife's brother, Navy Captain Frederick Wentworth, was engaged to Anne in 1806, but the engagement was broken when Anne was "persuaded" by her friends and family to end their relationship. Anne and Captain Wentworth, both single and unattached, meet again after a seven-year separation, setting the scene for many humorous encounters as well as a second, well-considered chance at love and marriage for Anne in her second "bloom."

## **The Gunslinger by Stephen King**

**Moderator: Evan Jones**

**Mondays at 3pm for 10 weeks**

"The man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed." The Gunslinger is the first of seven books from the Dark Tower series, which follows the last gunslinger remaining from a world lost to time. To save his world, the gunslinger must seek out the Dark Tower and defend it from collapse. But first, he must catch the man in black who has been ahead of him at every turn. Driven nearly to madness, Roland of Gilead must balance his ardent obsession for the Tower with his quickly dwindling humanity. Can Roland of Gilead catch the man in black in time and save his world from collapse?



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## **Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions by Edwin A. Abbot**

**Moderator: Bria Farmer & Chloe Prazinko**

**Tuesdays at 10 am for 4 weeks**

Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions tells the tale of A. Square as he visits other dimensions. This short book is a masterwork of worldbuilding, describing the unique two-dimensional world of the main character, as well as worlds of one and zero dimensions. Famous for helping people grasp the mathematical concepts of different dimensions, this book has stood the test of time, still popular 140 years after its publication. While the book is famous for its math, it is also a satire of the class and gender roles present in England at the time of its publication.

## **Unmasking AI by Joy Buolamwini**

**Moderator: Julianna Kershen**

**Tuesdays at 11 am for 6 weeks**

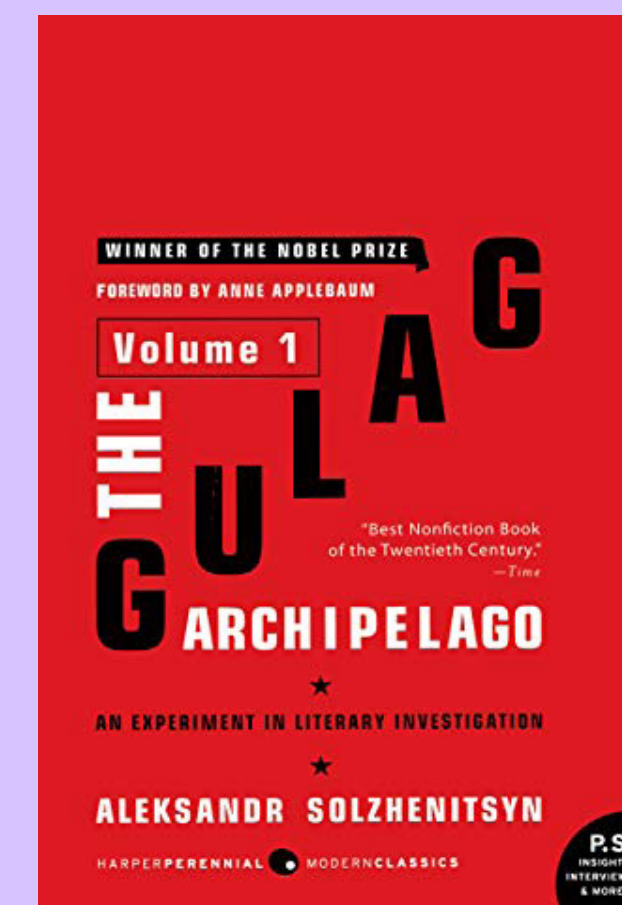
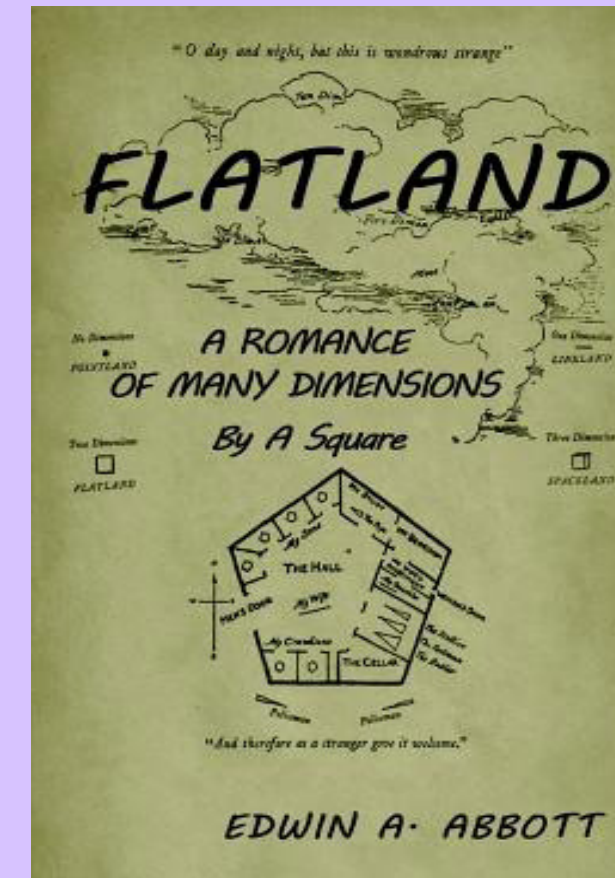
The emergence of artificial intelligence and related developing technologies has been both heralded as an incredible opportunity and derided as the potential source of our destruction. Dr. Buolamwini's book focuses on analyzing the affordances and constraints that we face in an era of generative AI, especially as they relate to racial and gender biases in the technocratic world of Silicon Valley and AI technology development. Her book invites us to develop a curious and skeptical eye towards the datafiction of our professional, public, and private lives, and the ways in which we must place human flourishing at the center of our interactions with technologies

## **The Gulag Archipelago Vol. I by Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn**

**Moderator: Caleb Xan Anagnos**

**Tuesdays at 1pm for 16 weeks**

Discover the harrowing masterpiece that unveils some of the darkest corners of the human experience, deep behind the Iron Curtain. Solzhenitsyn, a literary giant and former prisoner himself, weaves a semi-autobiographical, semi genealogical masterpiece which begins with :The Gulag Archipelago Volume 1: An Experiment in Literary Investigation." The Gulag Archipelago stands as a testament to the enduring quest for Justice and Truth. This book is a perfect choice for anyone - Interested in Soviet or Russian History - who enjoys gripping narratives and a unique prose - Wants to know why Putin has said that "the entire thorny path of his life" would "remain for us an example of genuine devotion and selfless serving to the people, fatherland and the ideals of freedom, justice and humanism".



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## **Brave New World by Aldous Huxley**

**Moderators: Daniel Shamsee & Lena Jurik**

**Tuesdays at 6pm for 4 weeks**

The futuristic World State is organized to ensure that everyone is happy and social stability is guaranteed. It is a world that has eliminated disease, old age, or war. It is devoid of passion, a place where the past has been abolished and the future cannot begin. Alpha plus psychologist Bernard Marx seems alone in harboring an ill-defined longing to break free from this world. The novel offers a satirical portrait of the measures that could be taken to protect mankind from its potential for self-destruction. Each day our society and technological progress marches forward, plunging us into a reality similar to the Brave New World. Published 17 years before Orwell's 1984, Brave New World has been ranked the 5th best English Language Novel of the 20th century by Modern Library and one of the top 100 banned and challenged books by the American Library Association.

## **Scythe by Neal Schusterman**

**Moderator: Nolen Jackson**

**Wednesdays at 2:30 pm for 8 weeks**

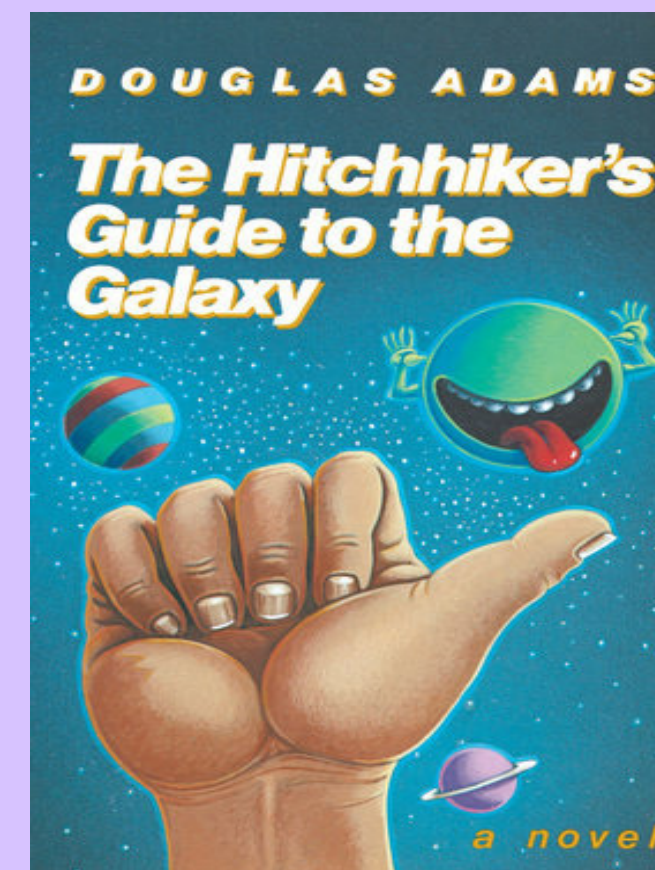
A world with no hunger, no disease, no war, no misery: humanity has conquered all those things, and has even conquered death. Now Scythes are the only ones who can end life\_ and they are commanded to do so, in order to keep the size of the population under control. Citra and Rowan are chosen to be a scythe\_ a role that neither wants. These teens must master the "art" of taking life, knowing that the consequence of failure could mean losing their own. This is a young adult fiction book, meaning it has easy to read dialogue and younger characters, but the moral questions in this book are very thought-provoking.

## **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams**

**Moderator: Robel Testaselassie**

**Wednesdays at 4pm for 5 weeks**

DON'T PANIC!! Get a copy of Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy and you'll be good wherever in the universe you may find yourself. Follow Arthur Dent and his fellow travelers as they careen through spacetime, become subjected to alien poetry, and puzzle over why 42 is the answer to Life, the Universe, and Everything. Interested in why 42 is the answer? Join us! And bring your towel (please don't actually bring your towel it's just a book reference).



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## Now Is Not the Time to Panic by Kevin Wilson

**Moderator: Imelda Aldava**

**Wednesdays at 5pm for 5 weeks**

Frankie Budge—aspiring writer, indifferent student, offbeat loner—is determined to make it through yet another summer in Coalfield, Tennessee, when she meets Zeke, a talented artist who has just moved into his grandmother’s house. Romantic and creative sparks begin to fly, and when the two jointly make an unsigned poster, shot through with an enigmatic phrase, it becomes unforgettable to anyone who sees it. The posters begin appearing everywhere, and people wonder who is behind them and start to panic. Satanists, kidnappers—the rumors won’t stop, and soon the mystery has dangerous repercussions that spread far beyond the town. Twenty years later, Frances Eleanor Budge gets a call that threatens to upend her carefully built life: a journalist named Mazzy Brower is writing a story about the Coalfield Panic of 1996. Might Frances know something about that?

## Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

**Moderator: Justice Neasbitt**

**Thursdays at 10am for 12 weeks**

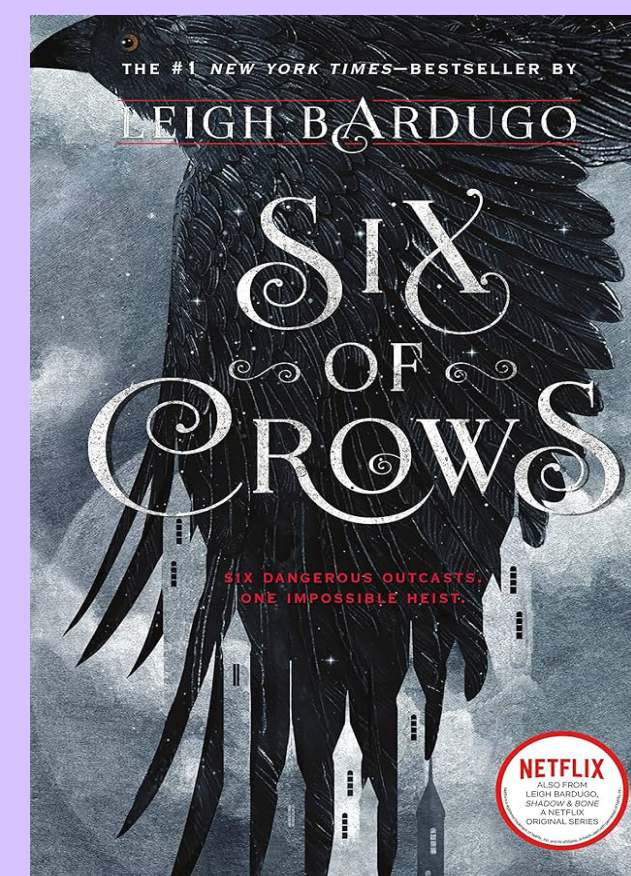
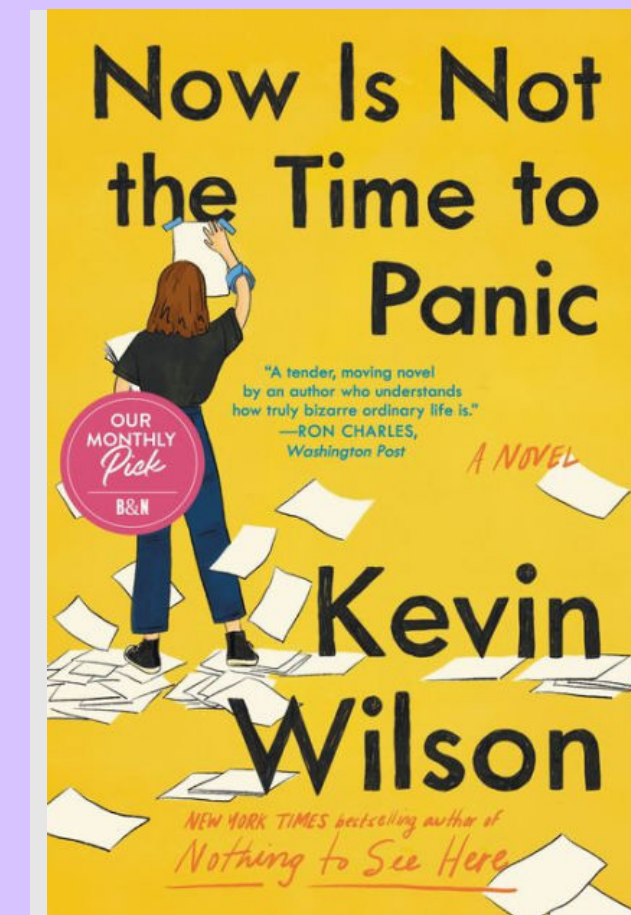
Raskolnikov is among the most miserable people in Moscow. He lives in a closet, his sister is marrying some rich guy who probably murdered his last wife, and his new friend he met at the bar recently died. With all of this in mind, Raskolnikov decides to murder someone. The book follows him trying to navigate whether or not his murder was a bad thing to do, and the family of his friend trying to navigate losing a husband and father, that might also be a good thing? You’ll just have to come along and judge these situations for yourself.

## Six of Crows by Leigh Bardugo

**Moderator: Alexandria Wilson**

**Thursdays at 1pm for 9 weeks**

Kaz Brekker, a mastermind and thief from Ketterdam, is tasked with infiltrating the Ice Court and freeing a Shu scientist from the Fierdan government. To accomplish this unthinkable mission and earn his promised sum of money, Kaz puts together a crew of six unlikely companions, all of whom with unique backgrounds and skill sets that make them assets for this mission. Inej, the Wrath, and Jesper, the sharpshooter, are both members of the Dregs, the gang that Kaz effectively leads. Wylan is an outcast of high society with a talent for demolition. Nina is a Heartrender with deadly power, and Mathias is a Fierdan druskelle. The crew must fight inner tensions and hauntings from the past in order to successfully penetrate the Ice Court, make it out unscathed, and prevent disaster from befalling.



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## **The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe**

**Moderators: Preston Vitosh & Teddy Winter**

**Thursdays at 2pm for 4 weeks**

This fantasy novel follows four siblings who, avoiding war-torn parts of London, stay with a professor in the English countryside. While exploring the large estate, they venture through a wardrobe portal to find another world trapped in winter known as Narnia. Join us and follow along as the four explore this land and be prepared for some Turkish Delight!

## **The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down**

**Moderator: Vignesh Anand**

**Fridays at 10:30 am for 8 weeks**

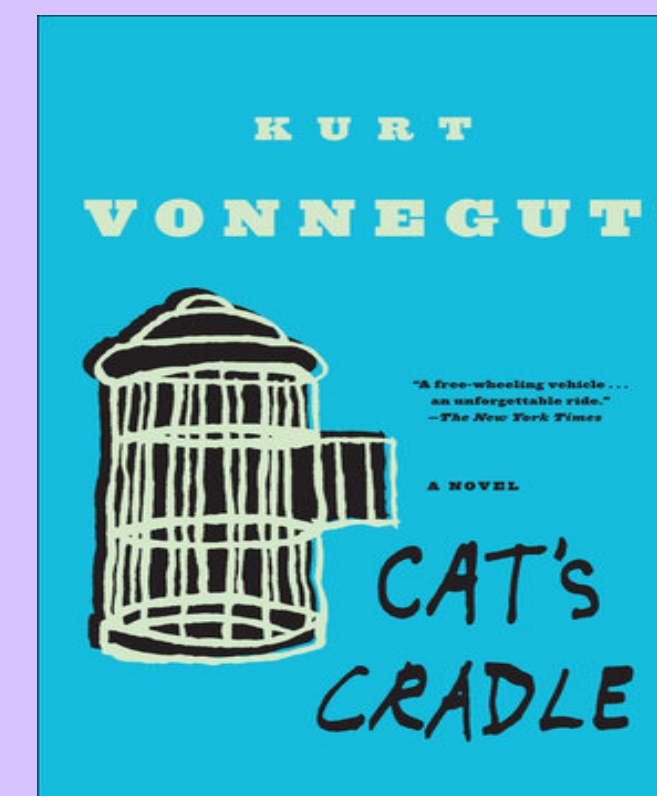
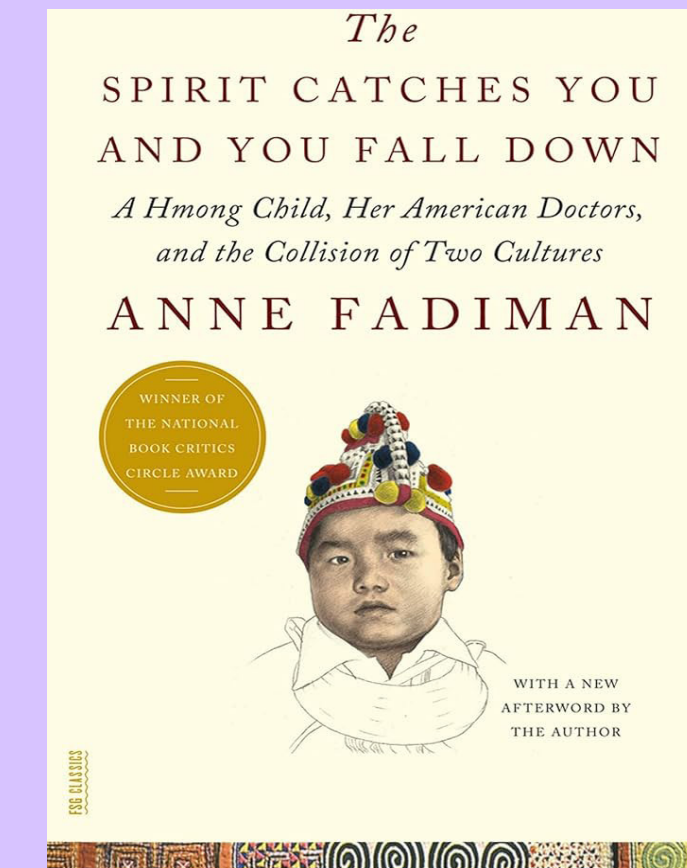
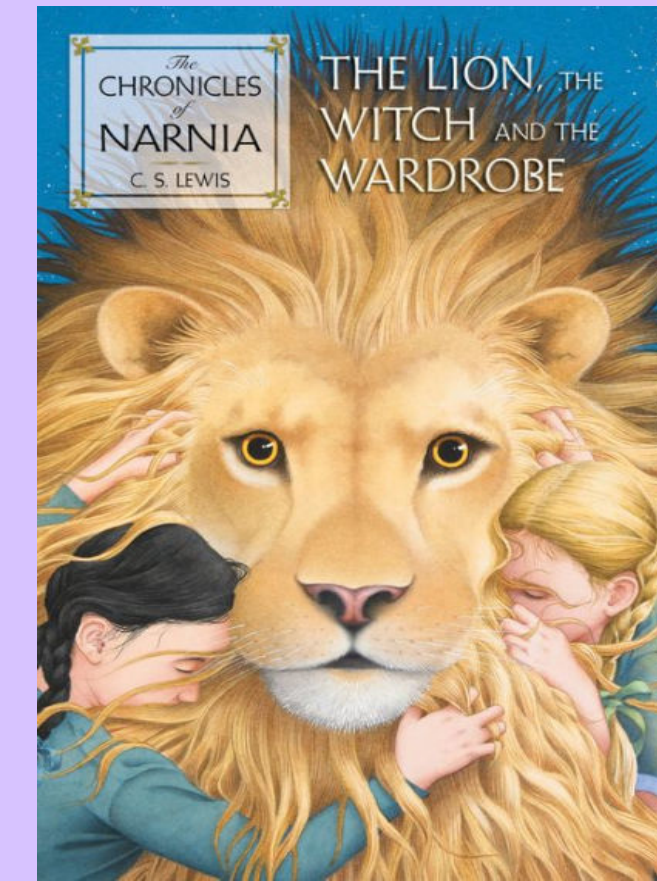
The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down tells the true story of a Hmong child's encounter with the American healthcare system. At just three months old, Lia Lee went to the emergency room for epilepsy, leading to a series of cultural misunderstandings that gradually made her condition worse. Lia's family fled a war in Laos, struggled with finances, and had trouble navigating American medicine and culture. Despite this hardship, Lia's parents do everything they know to care for her as her health tragically gets worse and worse. At the same time, there is no hope and a physician, a social worker, and foster parents work to understand her Hmong culture. Throughout this gripping drama, Fadiman inserts important cultural insights and calls for readers to reflect on the importance of cultural competence in a multicultural country like America. Read this book to find out whether Lia's caretakers are able to save her from possible death while gaining a first-person perspective of Hmong-American culture.

## **Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut**

**Moderator: Sam Hunt**

**Thursdays at 4pm for 7 weeks**

Written in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis, *Cat's Cradle* is an absurdist science-fiction satire on mad scientists, religion, and the apocalypse. It is considered one of the great novels by Kurt Vonnegut, a postmodern writer known for his ridiculous yet deeply meaningful commentaries on society. Set across the backdrop of Vonnegut's usual quirky mannerisms and style, *Cat's Cradle* investigates the meaning of life and the value of truth in a way that is both darkly amusing and emotionally touching. If you enjoyed works like *Slaughterhouse 5*, you'll love *Cat's Cradle*.



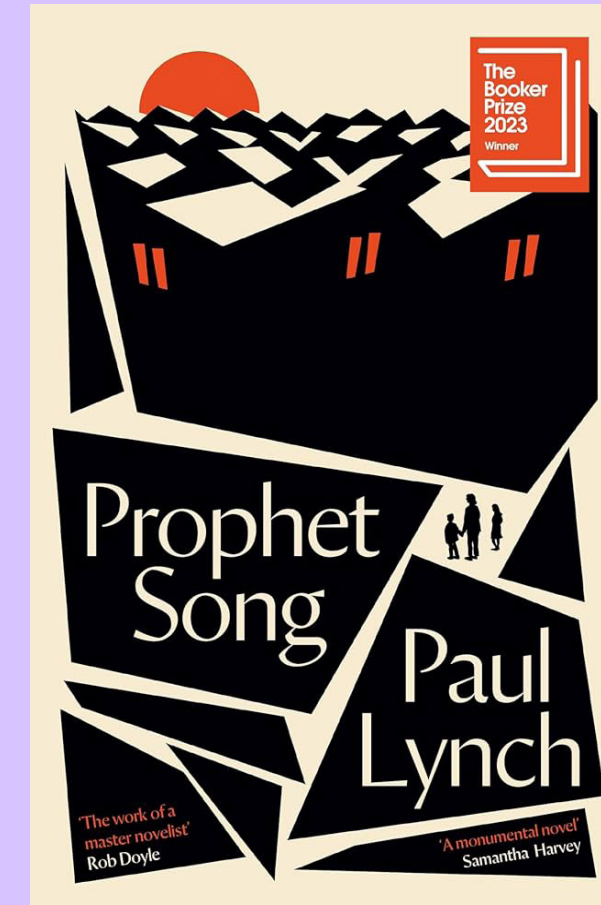


## **Prophet Song by Paul Lynch**

**Moderator: Prof. Brian Johnson**

**Tuesdays at 3pm for 8-9 weeks**

On a dark, wet evening in Dublin, scientist and mother-of-four Eilish Stack answers her front door to find two officers from Ireland's newly formed secret police on her step. They have arrived to interrogate her husband, a trade unionist. Ireland is falling apart, caught in the grip of a government turning towards tyranny. As the life she knows and the ones she loves disappear before her eyes, Eilish must contend with the dystopian logic of her new, unraveling country. How far will she go to save her family? And what\_ or who\_ is she willing to leave behind? The winner of the Booker Prize 2023, *Prophet Song* presents a terrifying and shocking vision of a country sliding into authoritarianism and a deeply human portrait of a mother's fight to hold her family together.



## **Beach Read by Emily Henry**

**Moderator: Madeline Stout**

**Fridays at 1:30 for 8 weeks**

In the novel "Beach Read," January Adams, a spirited writer of chick lit, relocates to a lake house in an effort to produce a novel owed to her publisher. However, her optimistic perspective on happily-ever-after is shaken due to recent revelations about her parents' marriage and a breakup with a boyfriend who couldn't handle the resulting emotional upheaval. Due to this personal turmoil, it becomes increasingly challenging for January to write her upcoming romance novel. At the lake house, she discovers that her neighbor is Augustus "Gus" Everett, an attractive yet irritable novelist and a former college acquaintance, rival, and crush. Both working on their respective books, they reconnect and devise a bet: January will attempt a serious work of literary fiction, while Gus will endeavor to create something with a more positive tone. The plan is designed to reignite January's creativity and broaden Gus' horizons, with the possibility of a romantic connection unfolding in the process.

