

Great Books at Colby Readings 1957 – 2025

1957: Great Issues in Faith

A Free Man's Worship, Bertrand Russell
Pensées, Blaise Pascal
Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, David Hume
Fear and Trembling, Soren Kierkegaard
I and Thou, Martin Buber
Gospel according to Matthew, Bible

1958: Modern Man & His Religion

Ash Wednesday, T.S. Eliot
Modern Man in Search of a Soul, Carl Jung
The Flies, Jean Paul Sartre
Between Man and Man, Martin Buber
Siddhartha, Herman Hesse
The Religious Situation, Paul Tillich

1959: Contemporary Literature & Essays

Night, Robinson Jeffers
Do Not Go Gently into that Good Night, Dylan Thomas
Magic, Science and Religion, Bronislaw Malinowski
What is Life? Erwin Schrodinger
The Bear, William Faulkner
Language and Myth, Ernst Cassirer

1960: The State

The Republic, Plato

1961: War and Peace

Community of Fear, various authors
A World without War, various authors
The Iliad, Homer
City of God (Part V), Augustine of Hippo
Perpetual Peace, Immanuel Kant
Civilization and Its Discontents, Sigmund Freud

1962: Insights into Man

Essay on Man, Ernst Cassirer
Canterbury Tales, Geoffrey Chaucer
The Tragedy of Dr Faustus, Christopher Marlowe
Notes From the Underground, Fyodor Dostoyevsky
Physics, Aristotle

1963: The Cardinal Virtues

Protagoras, Plato

Inferno, Dante Alighieri

Don Quixote, Miguel de Cervantes

The Autobiography, Benjamin Franklin

1964: Ethics

The Red and the Black, Stendhal

An Enemy of the People, Henrik Ibsen

Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals, Immanuel Kant

Beyond Good and Evil, Friedrich Nietzsche

Deuteronomy, Bible

1965: Eastern Religions

Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, Alan Watts

The Way of Life, Lao Tzu

The Upanishads, anonymous

The Sayings, Confucius

The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha, anonymous

Mysticism East and West, Rudolf Otto

1966: Crime and Punishment

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Crime and Punishment, Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Ghosts, Henrik Ibsen

The Trial, Franz Kafka

1967: Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics

Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle

1968: The Outsider

Victory, Joseph Conrad

Steppenwolf, Hermann Hesse

The Beast in the Jungle, Henry James

Lafcadio's Adventures, Andre Gide

The Stranger, Albert Camus

1969: Perceiving the External World

Some Main Problems of Philosophy, George Edward Moore
The Concept of Mind, Gilbert Ryle
Sense and Sensibility, John Langshaw Austin
The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, Alfred J. Ayer
Individuals, Peter Frederick Strawson

1970: Revolution

The Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky
Man's Fate, Andre Malraux
The Rebel, Albert Camus
The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon
Marat/Sade, Peter Weiss

1971: Counter-Culture

Howl, Allen Ginsberg
Revolution for the Hell of It, Abbie Hoffman
The Electric Acid Kool-Aid Test, Tom Wolfe
The Politics of Experience, R.D. Laing
The Making of a Counter-Culture, Theodore Roszak
A Study of History, Arnold J. Toynbee

1972: Man's Symbols

Mythical Thought, Ernst Cassirer
Black Elk Speaks, John G. Niehardt
Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, Mircea Eliade
Theseus, Andre Gide
Memories, Dreams and Reflections, Carl Jung

1973: The World of Art

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, James Joyce
The World of Art, Paul Weiss
Mythical Thought, Ernst Cassirer
The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway
Peter Quince at the Clavier, Wallace Stevens
Dear Theo, Irving Stone

1974: The World of Shakespeare

Henry V, As You Like It, Measure for Measure, Othello, King Lear, The Tempest, William Shakespeare

1975: In Search of Self

Phaedo, Plato
Song of Myself, Walt Whitman
Introduction to Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud
Demian, Hermann Hesse
Childhood and Society, Eric Erickson

1976: Ways of Life

Patterns of Culture, Ruth Benedict
Communitas, Paul & Percival Goodman
Walden II, B. F Skinner
The Horse's Mouth, Joyce Carey
The Phenomenon of Man, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

1977: Man's Quest

Between Man and Man, Martin Buber
Man's Search for Meaning, Victor Frankl
The Castle, Franz Kafka
The Doll's House, Henrik Ibsen
The Epic of Gilgamesh, anonymous
Lapis Lazuli, William Butler Yeats

1978: The Limits of Reason

Mysteries, Knut Hamsun
Reason and Existenz, Karl Jaspers
The Notebooks of Malte Larids Brigge, Rainer Maria Rilke
A Separate Reality, Carlos Castaneda
Manual of Zen Buddhism, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki

1979: Relationship: A Categorical Imperative

Nicomachean
Ethics, Books VIII & IX, Aristotle
No Exit, Jean Paul Sartre
I and Thou, Martin Buber
A Passage to India, E. M. Forster
The Empty Fortress, Bruno Bettelheim
Poems, Emily Dickinson

1980: Man and the Sea

Typhoon, Joseph Conrad
The Sea Around Us, Rachel Carson
Principles of Psychology, William James
The Voyage of the Argo, Apollonius of Rhodes
Riders to the Sea, John Millington Synge
Dover Beach, Matthew Arnold

1981: Modern Visions

The Hidden Dimension, Edward T. Hall
The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five, Doris Lessing
The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Erving Goffman
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Edward Albee
The Meaning of Meaning, C.K. Ogden & I.A. Richards
Poems, e.e. Cummings

1982: Communicating across Cultures

Communicating across Cultures for What? Condo & Seito
The Grass Roof, Younghill Kang
Tristes Tropiques, Claude Levi-Strauss
One Hundred Years of Solitude, Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Boesman and Lena, Athol Fugard
The Farce of the Drunk Monk, Mahendravarman, translated by P. Lal

1983: Fact and Fancy

Dialogues (selections), Plato
Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, Immanuel Kant
The Faerie Queen Book I, Edmund Spenser
A Midsummer Night's Dream, William Shakespeare
The Sybil, Par Lagerkvist
Tree and Leaf, J.R.R. Tolkien

1984: Mann's Journey

The Tao of Physics, Fritjof Capra
Irrational Man, William Barrett
The Magic Mountain, Thomas Mann

1985: The Republic

The Republic, Plato

1986: The Mind's I

An Essay on Comedy, George Meredith
Laughter, Henri Bergson
The Misanthrope, Moliere
The Mind's Eye, Douglas R. Hofstadter & Daniel C. Dennett

1987: The Family

Culture and Society, George Peter Murdock
The House by the Medlar Tree, Giovanni Verga
The Politics of the Family, R. D. Laing
Howard's End, E. M. Forster
The Homecoming, Harold Pinter
Intimations of Immortality, William Wordsworth

1988: Reason, Love or Faith

The Symposium, Plato
The Dynamics of Faith, Paul Tillich
Physics and Philosophy, Werner Heisenberg
The Brothers Karamazov, Fyodor Dostoyevsky

1989: Looking Ahead

Ecclesiastes, Bible
The Skin of Our Teeth, Thornton Wilder
The Aquarian Conspiracy, Marilyn Ferguson
Wholeness and the Implicate Order, David Bohm
The Universe is a Green Dragon, Brian Swimme
Fragments, Heraclitus

1990: Knowledge *Theaetetus*,

Plato
Faust, Part I, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
On the Interpretation of Dreams, Sigmund Freud
Four Quartets, T.S. Eliot
The Aims of Education, Alfred North Whitehead
Between Man and Man, Martin Buber

1991: Meeting One's Self

Remembrance of Things Past, Marcel Proust
King Lear, William Shakespeare
Meditations, Marcus Aurelius
Fathers and Sons, Ivan Turgenev
A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf

1992: A Different Voice

The Treasure of the City of Ladies, Christine de Pizan
Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Mary Wollstonecraft
To the Lighthouse, Virginia Woolf
The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir
In a Different Voice, Carol Gilligan
Poetry in a Different Voice, various authors

1993: Can the Truth Be Learned

Genesis, The Bible
Timaeus, Plato
The Immense Journey, Loren Eiseley
Introduction to the Philosophy of History, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
Philosophical Fragments, Soren Kierkegaard
The Death of Virgil, Hermann Broch

1994: Solitude

Solitude, Anthony Storr
Robinson Crusoe, Daniel Defoe
Society and Solitude, The Transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson
Gift from the Sea, Anne Morrow Lindbergh
Centering, M.C. Richards
Song of Myself, Walt Whitman

1995: Democracy in America

Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville
Daisy Miller, Henry James
Death of a Salesman, Arthur Miller
Two Cheers for Democracy, E.M. Forster

1996: The Future Is an Illusion

Phaedo, Plato
Inferno, Dante Alighieri
The Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison
Oration on the Dignity of Man, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola
The Future of an Illusion, Sigmund Freud
Sonnets 113, 129, 130, 137, 141, 148, William Shakespeare

1997: The Unexamined Life Is Not Worth Living

History of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides
Lysistrata, The Birds, The Clouds, Aristophanes
Politics, Book I, Aristotle
Treatise on Law Questions 90 – 97, Thomas Aquinas
Relish for Good and Evil Depends upon Our Opinion, Of Custom and of Not Changing a Received Law, Of the Education of Children, Of Pedantry, Of Cannibals, Folly to Measure Truth and Error by Our Own Capacity, Michael de Montaigne
The Social Contract, Books I & II, Jean Jacques Rousseau

1998: Do Unto Others

Metaphysics: On Potency, Aristotle
On Potentiality and Actuality, Plotinus
Signs of Life, Robert Pollack
Meditations I, II, III, René Descartes
The Old Order, Katherine Anne Porter
Identity and the Life Cycle, Erik Erikson
The Narrow Road to the Deep North, Bashō Matsuo

1999:

Tartuffe, Moliere
Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals, Immanuel Kant
Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed, Philip P. Hallie
Major Barbara, George Bernard Shaw
Beyond Good and Evil, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche
The Dream of a Ridiculous Man, Fyodor Dostoevsky

2000: Utopia

Utopia, Thomas More
Looking Backwards, Edward Bellamy
Leviathan Book I & II, Thomas Hobbes
R U R (Rossum's Universal Robots), Karel Čapek
The Book of Revelation, Chapters 20 & 21, Bible
The Journey of the Magi, T.S. Eliot
The Second Coming, William Butler Yeats

2001: The Truth of Myth

Images of Good and Evil, Martin Buber
Moby Dick, Herman Melville
Coriolanus, William Shakespeare
Discussions at Tusculum, Cicero
Fate, Ralph Waldo Emerson
Flowers of Evil (Fleurs de Mal), Charles Baudelaire

2002: Live and Learn

The Wisdom of Life, Arthur Schopenhauer
The Way of All Flesh, Samuel Butler
Henry IV Parts 1 & 2, William Shakespeare
The Pupil, Henry James
Poems, Elizabeth Bishop

2003: Doubt and Belief

Tragic Sense of Life, Miguel De Unamuno
The Brothers Karamazov (Selections), Fyodor Dostoyevsky
Thus Spake Zarathustra, Friedrich Nietzsche
The Investigations of a Dog, Franz Kafka
Poems, Philip Larkin

2004: No Ordinary Time

Great Speeches, Franklin Delano Roosevelt
The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck
The Origins of Totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt
Anarchism & Other Essays, Emma Goldman
Night, Elie Wiesel
Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, James Agee & Walker Evans

2005: The Fool

Praise of Folly, Desiderius Erasmus
Don Quixote, Miguel de Cervantes
Cato's Letters (Selections), John Trenchard & Thomas Gordon
Catch 22, Joseph Heller
Gimpel the Fool, Isaac Bashevis Singer

2006: Déjà Lu

I and Thou, Martin Buber
The Trial, Franz Kafka
Symposium, Plato
The Tempest, William Shakespeare
To the Lighthouse, Virginia Woolf
Song of Myself, Walt Whitman

2007: Thresholds of Science

Walden, Henry David Thoreau
Origin of Species & Descent of Man, Charles Darwin
The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas Kuhn
The Country of the Pointed Firs, Sarah Orne Jewett
The End of Nature, Bill McKibbin
An Enemy of the People, Henrik Ibsen

2008: Morality of Self

Ethics, Part IV, Benedict de Spinoza
Middlemarch, George Eliot
The Art of Writing, Henry James
Eminent Victorians (General Gordon & Florence Nightingale) Lytton Strachey
Andrea Del Sarto & Fri Lippo Lippi, Robert Browning

2009: Art of War

The Art of War, Sun Tzu
War and Peace, Leo Tolstoy
Three Guineas, Virginia Woolf
The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien
Poetry selections, Owens and Others

2010: Cultural Collisions

Life and Times of Michael K, J. M. Coetzee
The Golden Notebook, Doris Lessing
The Thief and the Dogs, Naguib Mahfouz
A Bend in the River, V. S. Naipaul
The Lion and the Jewel, Wole Soyinka
Selected Poems, Wislawa Szymborska, Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott, Octavio Paz & Pablo Neruda

2011: The Self-Conscious Imagination

Poetics, Aristotle
Concerning Human Understanding Intro, Parts I & II, John Locke
Tristram Shandy, Lawrence Sterne
Eugene Onegin, Alexander Pushkin
Object Lessons, Eavan Boland
Six Characters in Search of an Author, Luigi Pirandello

2012: Method or Madness: The Antic Disposition

Madness and Civilization, Michel Foucault
Hamlet, William Shakespeare
Will In the World, Stephen Greenblatt
Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead, Tom Stoppard
Gertrude and Claudius, John Updike
Shakespeare in the Bush, Laura Bohannon;
Dead Men's Fingers, Don Nigro;
Gertrude Talks Back, Margaret Atwood;
Everything and Nothing, Jorge Luis Borges

2013: Coming of Age

The Coming of Age, Simone De Beauvoir
The Professor's House, Willa Cather
Uncle Vanya, Anton Chekhov
All Passion Spent, Vita Sackville-West
Letters from a Stoic, Lucius Annaeus Seneca

2014: Judgment

Hippolytus, Euripides
Crime and Punishment, Fyodor Dostoyevsky
De Profundis, Oscar Wilde
The Fall, Albert Camus
Justice as Fairness (Parts 1-3). John Rawls
I Lock My Door Upon Myself, Joyce Carol Oates

2015: The Fall

Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe
Paradise Lost, John Milton
Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, David Hume
Absalom, Absalom!, William Faulkner
Frankenstein, Mary Shelley

2016: The Search for Meaning

Man's Search for Meaning, Viktor Frankl
The Magic Mountain, Thomas Mann
A Month in the Country, J. L. Carr
The Snow Leopard, Peter Matthiessen
Wit, Margaret Edson

2017: Family Matters

Antigone, Sophocles & Jean Anouilh
Father and Son, Edmund Gosse
Speak Memory, Vladimir Nabokov
Angle of Repose, Wallace Stegner,
The Optimist's Daughter, Eudora Welty
The Moons of Jupiter;
The Progress of Love; Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage, Alice Munro

2018: Woes of Wooing

The Sorrows of Young Werther, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
A Lover's Discourse, Roland Barthes
Antony and Cleopatra, William Shakespeare
Les Liaisons Dangereuses, Choderlos de Laclos
The Blue Flower, Penelope Fitzgerald
Goodbye, Columbus, Philip Roth

2019: Memory & Consciousness

In Search of Memory, Eric Kandel
Austerlitz, W.G. Sebald
Missing Person, Patrick Modiano,
Remains of the Day, Kazuo Ishiguro
Moon Tiger, Penelope Lively,
Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abby, William Wordsworth;
The Jilting of Granny Weatherall, Katherine Anne Porter;
Clearances, Seamus Heaney

2020: The American Experience (Virtual due to Coronavirus)

What Kind of Country Do We Want, Marilynne Robinson
Montana 1948, Larry Watson
Poems on American Democracy
Death of a Salesman, Arthur Miller
Citizen Kane (film), Orson Welles

2021: The American Experience

The Imperative of Integration, Elizabeth Anderson
Gilead, Marilynne Robinson
An American Childhood, Annie Dillard
Amusing Ourselves to Death, Neil Postman
American Pastoral, Phillip Roth
Gem of the Ocean, August Wilson

2022: Authenticity

Nature & Self-Reliance (Essays), Ralph Waldo Emerson
Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison
The Moviegoer, Walker Percy
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll
The Door, Magda Szabo
Siddhartha, Hermann Hesse

2023: The Journey

The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Joseph Campbell
Gilgamesh
The Odyssey, Homer
The Voyage Out, Virginia Woolf
As I Lay Dying, William Faulkner
Ulysses & Selected Poems, Alfred, Lord Tennyson

2024: Love & Passion

Much Ado About Nothing, William Shakespeare
Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen
Wuthering Heights, Emily Brontë
The Age of Innocence, Edith Wharton
The Feast of Love, Charles Baxter
Bonjour Tristesse, Françoise Sagan

2025: Existential Perspectives

At the Existential Cafe, Sarah Bakewell
The Stranger, Albert Camus
Catch 22, Joseph Heller
The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Milan Kundera
An Artist of the Floating World, Kazuo Ishiguro
Pigeon Feathers, John Updike; *Love*, Clarice Lispector