

Chapter 2: Institutional Best Practices of the Common Reading Experience

Sponsors: ACPA Commission for Student Involvement & ACPA Commission for Admissions, Orientation, and First Year Experience

Hosts: Sarah Hermsmeier, CSI Chair-Elect & Annie Kelly, AOFYE Member

Special Thanks: Grace Fama, CSI E-Series Coordinator, and CSI and AOFYE Leadership



Chapter 2: Institutional Best Practices of the Common Reading Experience

Presenters:

Dr. Sherri Edvalson Erkel, Director of First Year Experience at St. Ambrose University

Mary Elizabeth Sewell, Associate Director of University 101 Programs and Director of the First-Year Reading Experience at the University of South Carolina

Dr. Steven P. Girardot, Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and **Dr. Nirmal Trivedi**, Director of Academic Transition Programs in the Center for Academic Enrichment at Georgia Institute of Technology

Dr. Emerson Case, Professor of linguistics in the Department of English and Curriculum Coordinator for the First-Year Experience Program at California State University, Bakersfield

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Dusting off a First Book Initiative

St. Ambrose University

Davenport, IA

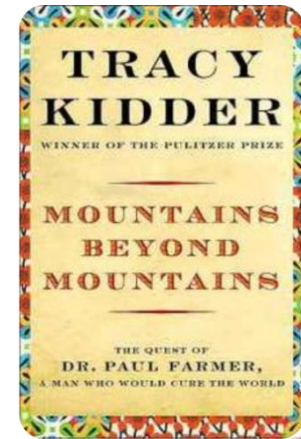
UG enrollment: 2800

Roman Catholic, Diocesan,
Liberal Arts university



SAU's First Book: A Brief History

- How it all began
 - English faculty organized at the departmental level, encouraged campus-wide participation
- Committee decision-making informal, not consensus-based
- Success varied greatly depending on the chosen book...
 - Examples: *Antigone* vs. *Mountains Beyond Mountains*
- First Book was “shelved” in 2009.



SAU's First Book: The Next Chapter

- A new home in First Year Experience
 - Reviewing past challenges and success within a FYE advisory board;
- Building consensus across campus
 - Book titles: anyone could submit
 - Selection committee: all-call for membership across campus
 - Included first-year students in the process
- Grounded in a purpose and clearly defined goals



Purpose and Goals

- **Purpose:** To use a common literary text to explore how students, teachers, and staff—as citizens of the St. Ambrose University community—engage with the liberal arts to enrich their own lives and the lives of others.
- **Goals**
 - Build a first year tradition around the importance and value of reading that includes various ideas, stories, types of learning, and forms of intellectual exploration through a shared intellectual experience;
 - Engage in the wonders, joys, mysteries and rewards of reading by integrating the book into the Annual Project sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences through various activities and learning experiences;
 - Take purposeful and constructive action based on the issues raised, questions asked, and opinions explored in a common text.



Selection Criteria

The First Book is:

- **Accessible to the target audience** of first-year students (consider length, reading level, relevance);
- **Related to the topic of the Annual Project** sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences (Sustainability, Gender, Race, for example);
- Written by **authors who demonstrate excellence** and care in their treatment of language and sentences;
- **Accessible for first-year programs** and events (i.e. the author can come to speak at Welcome Week or other fall semester events).

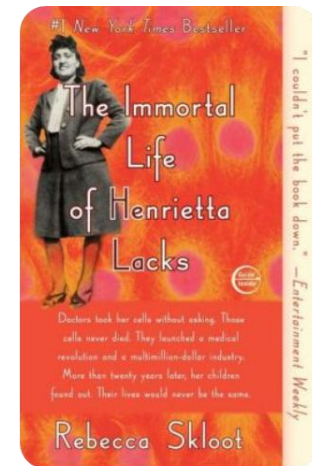
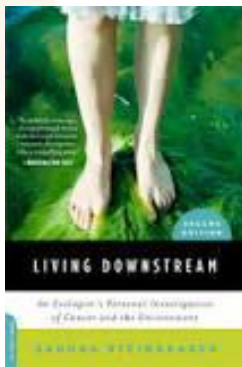
Criteria are important when reading piles of books and discussing with faculty/staff/students from different perspectives.

Criteria are the foundation for consensus!



First Book: Relaunch

- **Pilot study:** Fall 2012 *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Rebecca Skloot
 - 9 sections of FY seminar: 3 learning communities and 6 stand-alone sections
 - Instructors trained on discussing the book
 - First Book was the required text for those sections
 - **Implementation:** Fall 2013 *Living Downstream*, Sandra Steingraber
 - Population: FY Seminars (approx. 90% of first-year class)
 - Instructor training: Led by English faculty and FYE staff
- Ongoing support: Monthly check-in with instructors to share successes and challenges as well as one on one
- Author visit: Required event for FY seminar students



Assessing the Program

- Formative assessment
 - Student Surveys: Open-ended and scaled questions
 - Peer Assistant feedback: Peer assistants shared their experiences via bi-weekly meetings and a student-run blog
 - Instructor interviews: At the conclusion of the semester

“...information from the assessment is fed back within the system and actually used to improve the performance of the system in some way (William & Leahy, 2007, p. 31)



Lessons Learned

- Committee Process
 - Clear criteria
 - Timeline
- Teaching the book
 - Clear expectations for using the book: Check your assumptions!
 - Training on facilitating discussion of an academic text
 - Training on integrating the book into curriculum
 - Sharing relevant community resources
- Students/Peer Assistants
 - Have multiple ways for peer leaders to provide feedback and share successes and challenges
- Author visit/programming
 - Seek ways to collaborate with other campus depts.
 - Provide students structure for the visit (questions to be answered, sit with their class/instructor/PA) to keep them engaged
 - Make the author visit a required event to “pack the house” and demonstrate viability to campus leadership



FIRST-YEAR READING 
experience
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Director, First-Year Reading Experience

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Outline of Presentation

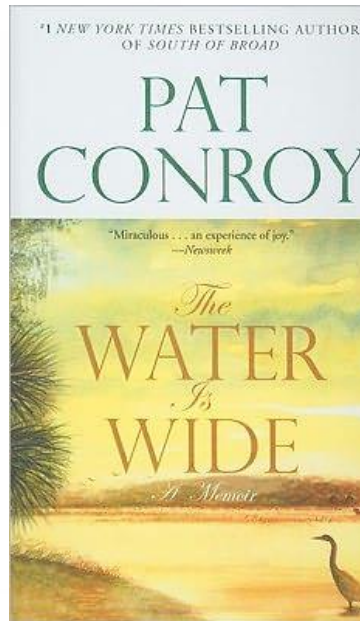
- Origins, History, and Evolution
- Book Selection Process
- Campus Partnerships
- Special Features
- Assessment Strategies



Foundations and Beginnings of FYRE

1994

- 300 Honors Students
- Common Academic Experience
- Provost Initiative



FYRE Today

- ✓ Monday before classes begin
- ✓ All 1st year students invited
- ✓ Partnership between U101 Programs, Provost Office, and Continuing Education and Conferences



FYRE Books 1994 - 2014

2014 *The Circle*, Dave Eggers

2013 *The Postmortal*, Drew Magary

2012 *Motherless Brooklyn*, Jonathan Lethem

2011 *No Impact Man*, Colin Beavan

2010 *Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer

2009 *The Complete Persepolis* by Marjane
Satrapi

2008 *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro

2007 *When the Emperor was Divine*, Julie Otsuka

2006 *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, Tracy Kidder

2005 *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the
Night-time*, Mark Haddon

2004 *Due Preparations for the Plague*, Janette
Turner Hospital



FYRE Books 1994 - 2014

2003 *Catch-22*, Joseph Heller

2002 *The Catcher in the Rye*, J. D. Salinger

2001 *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury

2000 *The Killer Angels*, Michael Shaara

1999 *The Sun Also Rises*, Ernest Hemingway

1998 *Who Will Run the Frog Hospital?*, Lorrie Moore

1997 *The Bear*, William Faulkner

1996 *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald

1995 *Rich in Love*, Josephine Humphreys

1994 *The Water Is Wide*, Pat Conroy



Selection Process

FYRE Committee

- Provost/Dean of Undergraduate Studies-Chair
- Director of First-Year Reading Experience
- University 101 Programs Representatives (2)
- Residence Life Representative
- English Faculty Members (1-2)
- University Campus Partner
- Undergraduate Students (2-3)



Book Selection Process

- Nominations Invited
- Selection Criteria
 - Available?
 - Engaging?
 - Good writing?
 - Relevant to students?
 - Broad potential for use?
 - Programming potential?



Campus Partners

- Office of the Provost
- Office of Orientation
- Registrar's Office
- Residence Life
- Dining Services
- Conferences and Continuing Education
- Campus and Public Safety
- Faculty and Staff



Custom Printing

- Partnership with publishing house
- Custom print logo on cover
- Discussion Guide insert or Reflections After Reading
- Includes information about FYRE
- Social Media information (#fyre14/#thecircle)
- Related contest links (sc.edu/fyre)

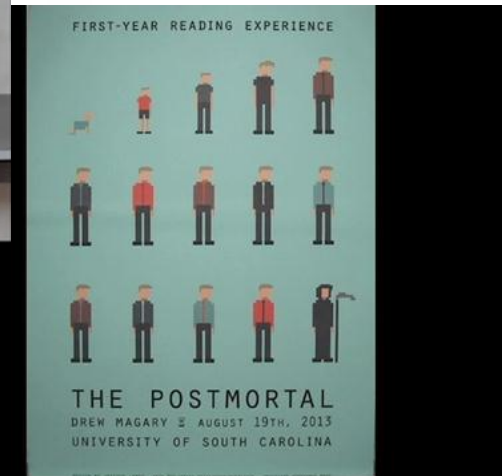


Special Features

- ARTS 346
Poster Design
- Service
Projects
- Picture Me
Reading
- Social
Media
- Essay
Contest
- Film
Festival



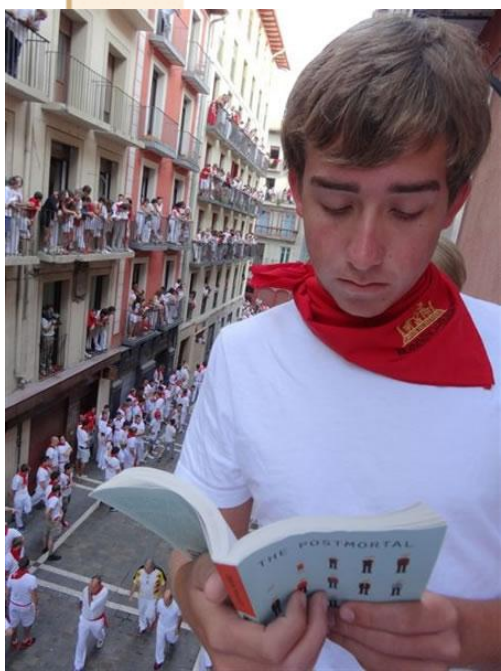
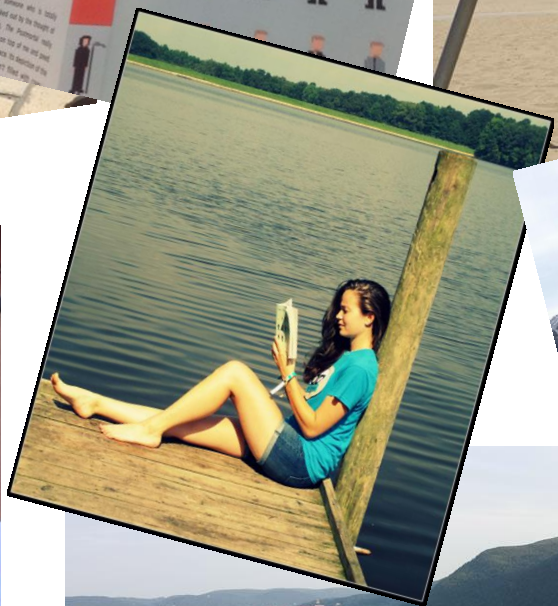
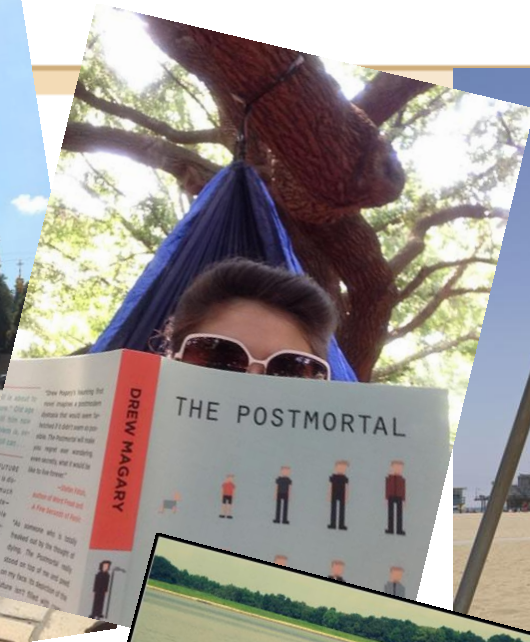
ART 346 Design Posters



Picture Me Reading

- Opportunity to engage discussion leaders throughout the summer
- Photo contest for 1st year students
- Winner recognized at FYRE and presented with signed copy of the book





Film Festival

- Student created films related to the theme of the 2011 book -*No Impact Man*
- University 101 sections voted on best film from class to submit for consideration
- Top 7 films were shown in campus movie theater
- Prizes awarded for:
 - University 101 Overall Winner (only University 101 student films are eligible to win)
 - Most Creative No Impact USC film (open to any student group that submits a film)
 - No Impact USC Overall Winner (open to any student group that submits a film)



Film Festival



2011 No Impact USC Film Festival Most Creative



2011 No Impact USC Film Festival
Overall Winner & Fan Favorite



Assessment

2013 First-Year Reading Experience

FYRE through the Years

2011
No Impact
Man



46.5% Students enjoyed reading the FYRE Book.
87.6% Discussion leaders said No Impact Man was a good selection for the FYRE.

2012
Motherless
Brooklyn



35.9% Students enjoyed reading the FYRE Book.
42.4% Discussion leaders said Motherless Brooklyn was a good selection for the FYRE.

2013
The
Postmortal



81.0% Students enjoyed reading the FYRE Book.
88.9% Discussion leaders said The Postmortal was a good selection for the FYRE.

In their own words:

"This year's book was eye opening, for many instructors as well as students, and finding books that reach the majority of individuals creates a great initial experience to achieve a sense of community. Thanks." - 2013 Discussion Leader

Discussion Leader Perspective

2012-2013



87.9% ➔ **96.7%**

The FYRE was extremely or very successful in helping introduce students to an important issue or topic.

44.9% ➔ **56.7%**

The FYRE was extremely successful in helping to introduce students to academic life at the University.

2012-2013



Student Preparation

The percent of discussion leaders that agreed or strongly agreed that their discussion group came prepared for the conversation about the book 2012 to 2013.

2012
61.8%

2013
88.9%

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

WHAT DID STUDENTS HAVE TO SAY?

The following provides the percentage of students that agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements.



81.0%

Enjoyed reading The Postmortal



77.1%

Said that hearing from the author, Drew Magary, was a valuable experience.



71.1%

Were an active participant in their small group.



86.0%

Read all or most of The Postmortal.

"The author's speech was very hard to digest... It was funny and I think some students enjoyed it, but a lot of my students expressed that they wished he would have talked more about the book and the characters" - 2013 Discussion Leader

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

MOTHERLESS
BROOKLYN

THE
POSTMORTAL

64.0%



My small group Discussion was a positive experience.



72.5%

62.5%



The small group discussion helped me make a connection with a USC faculty or staff member



65.4%

62.9%



The small group discussion helped me make connections with other first year students



67.0%

Discussion Leaders say.....

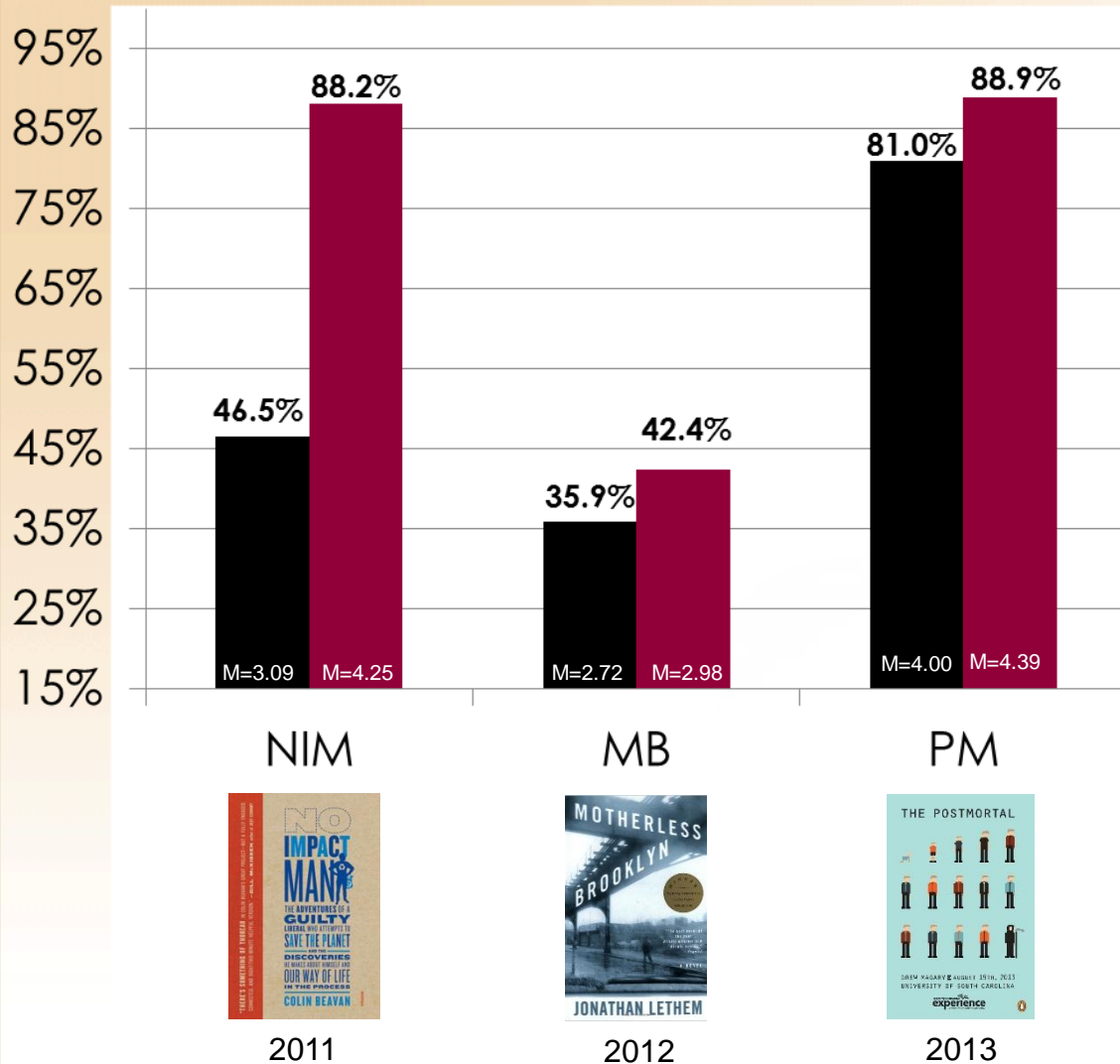
"FYRE was a fantastic event! Thank you for the hard work and preparation that was put in."

94.1%



The FYRE was well organized.

"Organize groups by how far they have to go for their discussion so the groups furthest away leave earlier."



- Students agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed reading the book
- Discussion Leaders agreed or strongly agreed that the book was a good choice



First-Year Common Reading @ Georgia Tech



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About Georgia Tech

- Four-Year, Public Research University
- Member of AAU
- Six Colleges (Engineering 64%)
- 21,471 students (67% undergraduate)
- Freshman Class ~2,700
- First-year retention rate: 96%
- Six-year graduation rate: 79%



Evolution of FYR @ Tech

1980: *The Double Helix*

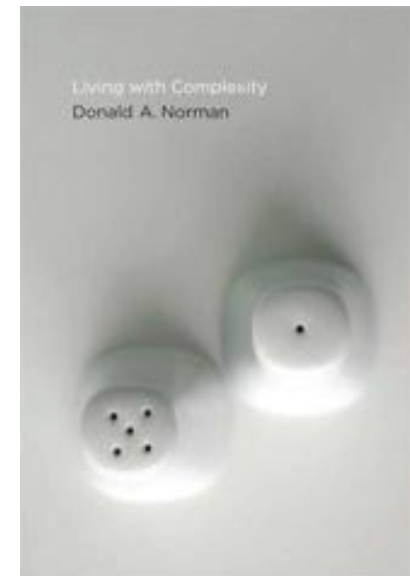
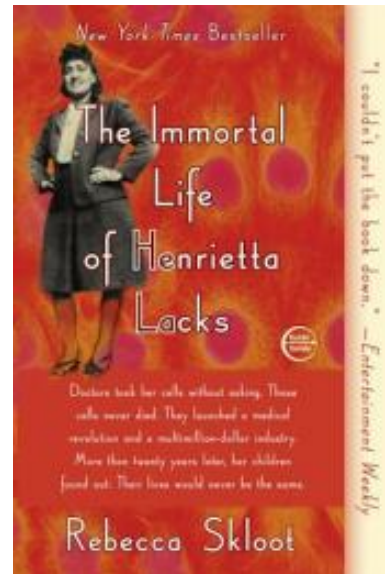
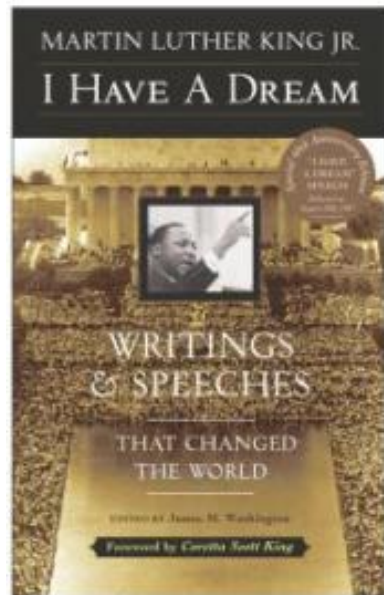
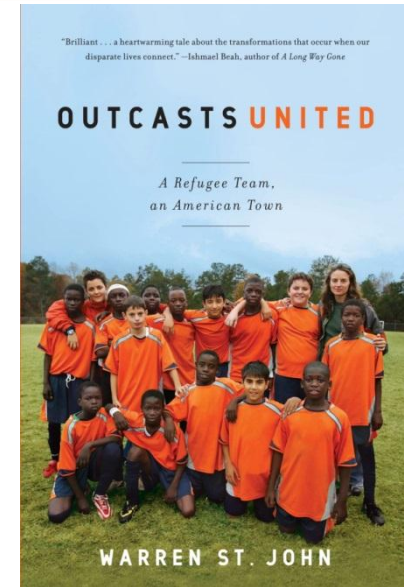
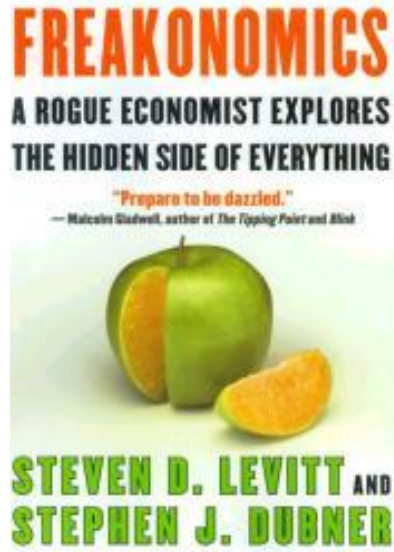
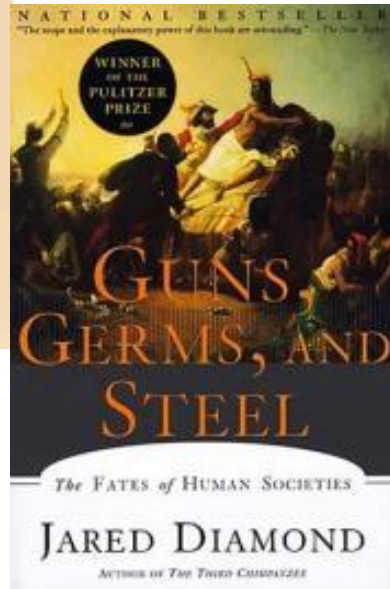
2006-07: Tech Open Book
Library and Student Leaders

2009: First-Year Seminar (GT1000) Reading
Student Affairs and Library

2010-13: First-Year Reading Project
Academic Affairs and Library

2014: Project One





Program Goals



- Create a shared intellectual experience
- Strengthen community among first-years
- Enhance student-faculty interaction
- Model academic behaviors and expectations

Selection

- Organization
 - Overseen by Academic Affairs
 - Housed in Center for Academic Enrichment and connected closely with First-Year Seminar
- Reading Selection Process
 - Clear criteria for selection
 - Committee recommends and reviews titles
 - Faculty (and student) involvement
 - Campus partners (Student Affairs, Residence Life, etc.)
 - Approvals- Final nomination sent to Vice Provost and then Provost for approval



Programming

- Partner with Publisher
- Book Distribution Process (Orientation)
- Communication/Marketing Plan
- Curriculum Guide for faculty
- Website with resources
- Integration into first-year curriculum
 - GT1000 First-Year Seminar
 - English 1101/2
- Fall Programming Series - Collaboration
 - Plenary Lecture with Author (or relevant speaker)
 - Family Weekend
 - Panel Sessions and “Hot Topics” Dinners

Evolution... “Project One”

- Learn to communicate interests/passions
- Learn about interdisciplinary problem-solving
- Start becoming literate about “digital identity”.



Still a Common Reading

- Theme: “Digital Lives”
- Proposed Book: Ted Chiang’s “Truth of Fact, Truth of Feeling”
- Additional Readings: faculty suggestions.



How? Connect in the Summer

- Online Community / ePortfolio



How? Engage a common project

- “Create a dynamic digital portfolio”



How? Enroll ENGL and FYS

- Graded assignment for ENGL 1101 and 1102 in week 1



How? Enroll the Campus

- Find goals in common programs, departments, institutions.



How? A Balanced Structure

- Core Faculty Committee
- Pedagogy Committee
- Assessment Committee
- Programming Committee
- Marketing Team



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- Core Faculty Committee
- Pedagogy Committee
- Assessment Committee
- Programming Committee
- Marketing Team



CSU Bakersfield

First-Year Experience **FYE**

... Explore Your Possibilities!

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Why Community Partnerships?

- Brookings Institute/Central Connecticut State University studies have placed Bakersfield/Kern County as the least literate metropolitan area in the United States
- Only 14.7% of adults 25 and older have a bachelor's degree
- Only 70.2% of adults 25 and older have a high school degree



Bakersfield/Kern County

- Highest high school dropout rate in California – 16%
- Lowest college-going rate in California – 44.1%
- Only $\frac{1}{4}$ of CSUB's regularly admitted first-time students place into both college-level English and Math
- 62% of incoming freshmen require remediation in English



CSUB 101 – FYE Seminar

- Begun in 2005
- Required of all first-time freshmen
- Mission: To build, nurture and sustain a vibrant educational community at CSUB committed to academic and personal success of undergraduate students “in transition”



Runner Reader Program

- Begun in 2007 to support the FYE Program
- Students are engaged with the book throughout the first quarter of the year
- Author visits campus near the end of the quarter
- Selection is always multicultural in nature



Runner Reader Program

- Helps us fulfill 4 of the 8 main goals of the program:
- Gaining academic success via technical skills and information literacy
- Increasing awareness and appreciation for diversity
- Getting campus and community involvement
- Having a shared experience



Successful Division of Labor

- **Composition Program**
- Responsible for studying the rhetorical aspects of the book
- Use a writing prompt based on the book for both midterm exam and writing contest
- Students required to attend the author's speech



Successful Division of Labor

- **FYE Program**
- Use readings and lectures related to the book to contextualize the study of 8 academic skills
- Supplement work done in Composition classes
- Have opportunity to enter writing contest
- Attend author event



Successful Division of Labor

- **Other Campus Entities**
- Library hosts afternoon reception for author
- Summer Bridge students read and study the book
- Sensational Sophomores serve as hosts for reception and author event
- Plays, panel discussions, Coffee Talk, etc.



Kern County Library

- **One Book, One Bakersfield, One Kern program**
- Became a partner in 2010
- Members of core committee help to select the book
- Produce all guides, flyers, brochures, and PR materials
- Coordinate all community events that lead up to author visit



Kern County Library

- Sherriff's Activities League
- Police Activities League
- Bakersfield Museum of Art
- Metro Art Galleries
- Kern County Arts Council
- Bakersfield City Recreation and Parks
- Kern County Public Health
- Kern County Housing Authority
- Churches
- Kern Adult Literacy Council
- Housing Authority Rapid Transit
- Public Radio and Television
- Community Theatre
- Local newspaper
- Homeless Center
- Local and regional politicians
- Girl Scouts
- Local Counseling Center
- Friends of the Library



Russo's Books

- Partner since 2010
- Hold events such as book discussions, panel discussions, and readings
- Received a \$5000 award from author James Patterson to purchase young reader edition of the book
- Donating copies of book to 15 senior English classes in Kern High School District



Taft College

- Partner since 2011
- Members of the Liberal Arts Division serve on OBOB Core Committee
- Read and study the selection in English courses
- Students are encouraged to attend the author event
- Can participate in writing contest



Bakersfield City School District

- Partner since 2012
- BCSD representative serves on OBOB Core Committee
- Selected BCSD students read a companion text to the Runner Reader selection
- Coordinate events for BCSD students and their parents related to the companion text



Reading Institute

- Partner since Fall 2013
- Develop an Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC) module based on Runner Reader selection
- Written by high school teacher and college instructor
- Use this module to train ERWC teachers at both the Reading Institute and the KCSOS training sessions



Kern High School District

- Beginning in Fall 2014
- KHSD instructor will help create the ERWC module
- KHSD librarians will help to select a text that is appropriate for all constituents
- Students who complete the ERWC module will be eligible to participate in the writing contest



Kern High School District

- KHSD students will also be eligible to display projects based on the Runner Reader selection at the afternoon reception
- Most importantly – students who complete the ERWC module will be considered to have met the qualifications for entry into college-level English



Going Forward

- In Fall 2016
- FYE Program will become a true year-long program
- Junior-Year Diversity Course
- New thematic approach to General Education
- Seamless progression from elementary school through college and beyond



Chapter 2: Institutional Best Practices of the Common Reading Experience

Question & Answer Session

Use “Question” Feature in GoToWebinar Control Panel to Pose a Question



Chapter 2: Institutional Best Practices of the Common Reading Experience

Please Stay In Contact!

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Thank You for Participating!

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