**1B Pathways** Fall 2015 **Book Club Choices**

**Overview:** I’ve tried to assemble a broad array here. Some of these have been road-tested by previous classes, either composition classes or English 22 (science fiction and fantasy). I would be happy to consider any other books you might want to recommend. They must be good, college-level books that fit into at least one of the Pathways themes. Also, they should be something your classmates are likely to be able to find, learn from, and (ideally) enjoy. If you’re pitching a book you’ve read/written about for another class, you can’t choose that as your book.

**Global Citizenship Theme**

1. **Little Princes** by Conor Grennan **“**In search of adventure, 29-year-old Conor Grennan traded his day job for a year-long trip around the globe, a journey that began with a three-month stint volunteering at the Little Princes Children’s Home, an orphanage in war-torn Nepal.” (from Amazon) This memoir is a great read—hilarious, charming, and yet given due gravitas by the hardships it depicts. It has been very popular with previous classes.
2. **The Deportees** by Roddy Doyle(fiction) This short story collection by award-winning Irish writer Roddy Doyle focuses on the “Celtic Tiger” period in Dublin, when Ireland’s sudden economic boom in tech and real estate led to a sudden influx of immigrants, especially from Africa and Eastern Europe, eager to find better lives. The title story is a sequel to Doyle’s first big hit, *The Commitments* (novel then film), but this time the band Jimmy Rabbitte puts together is deliberately multi-national. The other stories include a ghost story, some crime drama, love stories, and unclassifiable tales about what it means to be Irish, European, and human in the 21st century.
3. **The Smartest Kids in the World** by Amanda Ripley **“**In a handful of nations, virtually all children are learning to make complex arguments and solve problems they’ve never seen before. They are learning to think, in other words, and to thrive in the modern economy. Inspired to find answers for our own children, author and *Time* magazine journalist Amanda Ripley follows three Americans embed­ded in these countries for one year. [. . . .] Their stories, along with groundbreaking research into learning in other cultures, reveal a pattern of startling transformation: none of these countries had many “smart” kids a few decades ago. [This book examines how they did it.]” From Amazon
4. **Working in the Shadows** by Gabriel Thompson **“**What is it like to do the back-breaking work of immigrants? To find out, Gabriel Thompson spent a year working alongside Latino immigrants, who initially thought he was either crazy or an undercover immigration agent. He stooped over lettuce fields in Arizona, and worked the graveyard shift at a chicken slaughterhouse in rural Alabama. [. . . .] Combining personal narrative with investigative reporting, Thompson shines a bright light on the underside of the American economy, exposing harsh working conditions, union busting, and lax government enforcement—while telling the stories of workers, undocumented immigrants, and desperate US citizens alike, forced to live with chronic pain in the pursuit of $8 an hour.” From Amazon. This one has been popular with previous classes. A good read, and an eye-opener.
5. **Perfume Dreams** by Andrew Lam(essay collection/memoir) **“**[N]oted journalist and NPR commentator Andrew Lam explores his lifelong struggle for identity as a Viet Kieu, or a Vietnamese national living abroad. At age eleven, Lam, the son of a South Vietnamese general, came to California on the eve of the fall of Saigon to communist forces. He traded his Vietnamese name for a more American one and immersed himself in the allure of the American dream: something not clearly defined for him or his family. Reflecting on the meanings of the Vietnam War to the Vietnamese people themselves--particularly to those in exile--Lam picks with searing honesty at the roots of his doubleness and his parents' longing for a homeland that no longer exists.” From Amazon. Local author!
6. **& 6. Banker to the Poor** and **Creating a World Without Poverty** by Muhammed Yunus. Both of these books by the Bangladeshi Nobel Peace Prize Winning economist and social entrepreneur show how fairly simple but revolutionary ideas in banking and business can improve the lives of millions and reinvigorate the global economy. Both include memoir, business case studies, and economic analysis. The first is more about epiphany and innovation, the second is more about applying the ideas and analysis of the implications. Both are quite readable, even if you’re not a business major. (You can choose one or the other, obviously!)

**Sustainability Theme**

1. **No Impact Man** by Colin Beavan (memoir) “What does it really take to live eco-effectively? For one year, Colin Beavan swore off plastic and toxins, turned off his electricity, went organic, became a bicycle nut, and tried to save the planet from environmental catastrophe while dragging his young daughter and his Prada-wearing wife along for the ride. Together they attempted to make zero impact on the environment while living right in the heart of Manhattan, and this is the sensational, funny, and consciousness-raising story of how they did it. With *No Impact Man*, Beavan found that no-impact living is worthwhile--and richer, fuller, and more satisfying in the bargain.” From Amazon
2. **Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World** by Alan Weisman. **“**Los Llanos—the rain-leached, eastern savannas of war-ravaged Colombia—are among the most brutal environments on Earth and an unlikely setting for one of the most hopeful environmental stories ever told. Here, in the late 1960s, a young Colombian development worker named Paolo Lugari wondered if the nearly uninhabited, infertile llanos could be made livable for his country’s growing population. He had no idea that nearly four decades later, his experiment would be one of the world’s most celebrated examples of sustainable living: a permanent village called Gaviotas.” From Amazon. (And I’ll add my own opinion: The combination a great story and great writing—plus the intriguing chronicle of innovations in green engineering and habitat restoration have made this a good read, both for engineering types and the rest of us.)
3. **All Over Creation** (novel) “The post-millennial farming community has been invaded by Agribusiness forces at war with a posse of activists, the Seeds of Resistance, who travel the country in a camping car, ‘The Spudnick,’ biofueled by pilfered McDonald’s french-fry oil. [. . . ] Ruth Ozeki returns here to deliver a quirky cast of characters and a wickedly humorous appreciation of the foibles of corporate life, globalization, political resistance, youth culture, and aging baby boomers. *All Over Creation* tells a celebratory tale of the beauty of seeds, roots, and growth—and the capacity for renewal that resides within us all.” From Amazon
4. **Eyes Wide Open: Going Behind the Environmental Headlines** by Paul Fleischman “This remarkable book offers young people the tools they need to become informed, responsible global citizens. ... Thoughtful readers will appreciate this insightful, refreshing title’s broad scope, use of specific examples, and the many references to related books, documentaries, and online articles, lectures, and interviews. The appended "How to Weigh Information" section is particularly excellent. A Newbery Medal–winning writer, Fleischman notes that he is "no trained scientist," but his exceptional ability to organize the information here and present it articulately makes him a notable citizen scientist.”—Booklist (starred review) from Amazon
5. **Cool It** by Bjorn Lomborg “Bjorn Lomborg argues that many of the elaborate and staggeringly expensive actions now being considered to meet the challenges of global warming ultimately will have little impact on the world’s temperature. He suggests that rather than focusing on ineffective solutions that will cost us trillions of dollars over the coming decades, we should be looking for smarter, more cost-effective approaches (such as massively increasing our commitment to green energy R&D) that will allow us to deal not only with climate change but also with other pressing global concerns, such as malaria and HIV/AIDS. And he considers why and how this debate has fostered an atmosphere in which dissenters are immediately demonized.” (from Amazon)

**Creativity Theme**

1. **The Circle** by Dave Eggers (fiction) This is this year’s selection for the SJSU Campus Reading Program. If you like comic social satires like *Brave New World*, and if you can bear to see a giant tech company *much* like Google made to seem just a little creepy, you will enjoy this great novel by the award-winning local writer and philanthropist Dave Eggers.
2. **One World Schoolhouse** by Salman Khan. "In this book, Salman Khan sheds light on how our current education system leaves a gap in every student's core knowledge. He found ways to fill this gap by encouraging differentness, fresh thinking and implementing creativity in the learning process. [. . . .] The way he relates the proper goal of education and the natural bent of the child is fascinating. He refers "natural bent" as the particular mix of talents and perspectives that makes each mind unique, and allows minds to be strikingly original. The way Khan portrays the concept of education and the mechanism of learning is revolutionary. This book is a must-read for those providing real education to our children in this new age of technology."―Muhammed Yunus, the 2006 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (from Amazon)
3. **The City Not Long After** by Pat Murphy(novel) A post-apocalyptic (but not dystopian) novel set in a San Francisco, told in a magical-realism style. The post-plague city, populated by pacifist artists and “makers,” is starting to revive when they are assailed by militaristic forces from Sacramento. This is a truly creative look at the power of creativity, and it is surprisingly optimistic and life-affirming, considering its genre.
4. **The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind** byWilliam Kamkwamba. “Discarded motor parts, PVC pipe, and an old bicycle wheel may be junk to most people, but in the inspired hands of William Kamkwamba, they are instruments of opportunity. Growing up amid famine and poverty in rural Malawi, wind was one of the few abundant resources available, and the inventive fourteen-year-old saw its energy as a way to power his dreams. ‘With a windmill, we'd finally release ourselves from the troubles of darkness and hunger,’ he realized. ‘A windmill meant more than just power, it was freedom.’ [. . . .] [This book] is an inspiring story of an indomitable will that refused to bend to doubt or circumstance. When the world seemed to be against him, William Kamkwamba set out to change it.” --Dave Callanan (from Amazon)
5. **Start Something that Matters** by Blake Mycoskie. “[M]y goal is to influence other people to go out into the world and have a positive impact, to inspire others to start something that matters, whether it’s a for-profit business or a nonprofit organization. I feel a deep sense of responsibility to share everything that we’ve learned from TOMS, so that others can learn from both our mistakes and the counterintuitive principles that have guided our success. I would also like to share the stories of other social entrepreneurs, from all walks of life, who are taking that wonderful and courageous step forward, who are moving from thinking about doing something to actually doing it.” (Blake Mycoskie explains his book on Amazon.)
6. **Oryx and Crake** by Margaret Atwood(novel) This is a contemporary classic of satiric dystopian fiction by one of the greatest writers in this genre. This dark tale shows how our society might be engineering its own destruction on so many levels, but one mad scientist creates a new and “improved” race of humans before the one we know is wiped out—*almost* entirely. It’s impossible to do this book justice in a short summary, but it’s absolutely brilliant, the first in a trilogy.