

Book Groups: Available Books and Facilitators for November 2023 - October 2024

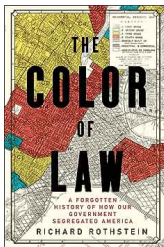
This list contains the current facilitators and the books available for New Hampshire Humanities' *Perspectives* book groups. Click on the links for information about each facilitator and book. See below for instructions about how to apply to host a book group.

More information is available on our website: <https://www.nhhumanities.org/programs/category/perspectives-book-groups>

Facilitator: Kiki Berk

PHILOSOPHY

Format Preference: Online or in-Person



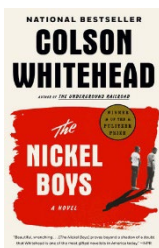
Richard, Rothstein, [*The Color of Law: a Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*](#)

In this groundbreaking history of the modern American metropolis, Richard Rothstein, a leading authority on housing policy, explodes the myth that America's cities came to be racially divided through de facto segregation--that is, through individual prejudices, income differences, or the actions of private institutions like banks and real estate agencies. Rather, *The Color of Law* incontrovertibly makes clear that it was de jure segregation--the laws and policy decisions passed by local, state, and federal governments--that actually promoted the discriminatory patterns that continue to this day.



Mary Doria Russell, [*The Sparrow*](#)

The story of a charismatic Jesuit priest and linguist, Emilio Sandoz, who leads a twenty-first-century scientific mission to a newly discovered extraterrestrial culture.

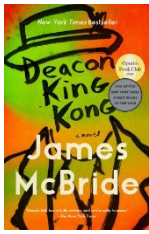


Colson Whitehead , [*The Nickel Boys*](#)

Author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Underground Railroad*, Colson Whitehead, brilliantly dramatizes another strand of American history through the story of two boys sentenced to a hellish reform school in 1960s Florida. Based on the history of a real reform school in Florida that operated for one hundred and eleven years and warped and destroyed the lives of thousands of children, *The Nickel Boys* is a devastating, driven narrative by a great American novelist whose work is essential to understanding the current reality of the United States.

Facilitator: **Carrie Brown**

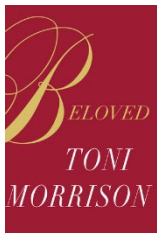
Format Preference: Online or in-Person



James McBride, [*Deacon King Kong*](#)

In September 1969, a fumbling, cranky old church deacon known as Sportcoat shuffles into the courtyard of the Cause Houses housing project in south Brooklyn, pulls a .38 from his pocket, and, in front of everybody, shoots the project’s drug dealer at point-blank range.

The reasons for this desperate burst of violence and the consequences that spring from it lie at the heart of *Deacon King Kong*. McBride brings to vivid life the people affected by the shooting.



Toni Morrison, [*Beloved*](#)

Sethe was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. Sethe has too many memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. And Sethe’s new home is haunted by the ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: Beloved. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

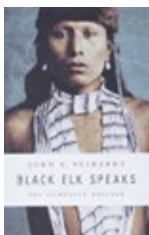


Katherine Sharp Landdeck, [*The Women with Silver Wings*](#)

The inspiring true story about American women pilots in World War II.

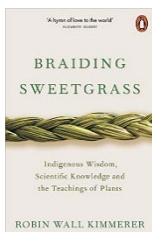
Facilitator: **Damian Costello**

Format Preference: Online or in-Person



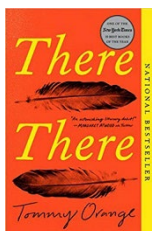
Nicholas Black Elk and John G. Neihardt, [*Black Elk Speaks*](#)

The life story of Nicholas Black Elk (1863–1950), the Oglala Lakota visionary and healer.



Robin Wall Kimmerer, [*Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*](#)

Drawing on her life as an indigenous scientist, and as a woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we’ve forgotten how to hear their voices.

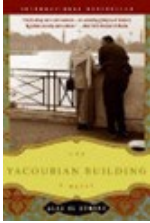


Tommy Orange, [*There There*](#)

In *There There*, Cheyenne/Arapaho novelist Tommy Orange explores the challenges and rich texture of Native urban life. Set in Oakland, CA, the novel follows a wide range of characters on their way to the Big Oakland Powwow and deeper engagement with Indian identity.

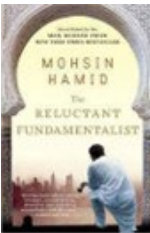
Facilitator: Mohamed Defaa

Format Preference: Online or in-Person



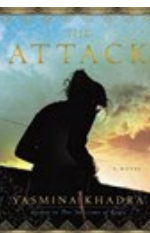
Alaa Al Aswany, [*The Yacoubian Building*](#)

This controversial bestselling novel in the Arab world reveals the political corruption, sexual repression, religious extremism, and modern hopes of Egypt today. All manner of flawed and fragile humanity reside in the Yacoubian Building, a once-elegant temple of Art Deco splendor now slowly decaying in the smog and bustle of downtown Cairo: a fading aristocrat and self-proclaimed "scientist of women"; a sultry, voluptuous siren; a devout young student, feeling the irresistible pull toward fundamentalism; a newspaper editor helplessly in love with a policeman; a corrupt and corpulent politician, twisting the Koran to justify his desires. These disparate lives careen toward an explosive conclusion in Alaa Al Aswany's remarkable international bestseller. Teeming with frank sexuality and heartfelt compassion, this book is an important window on to the experience of loss and love in the Arab world.



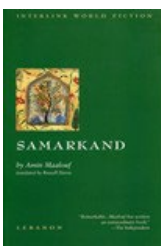
Mohsin Hamid, [*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*](#)

At a café table in Lahore, a bearded Pakistani man converses with an uneasy American stranger. As dusk deepens to night, he begins the tale that has brought them to this fateful encounter. Changez is living an immigrant's dream of America. At the top of his class at Princeton, he is snapped up by an elite valuation firm. He thrives on the energy of New York, and his budding romance with elegant, beautiful Erica promises entry into Manhattan society at the same exalted level once occupied by his own family back in Lahore. But in the wake of September 11, Changez finds his position in his adopted city suddenly overturned, and his relationship with Erica shifting. And Changez's own identity is in seismic shift as well, unearthing allegiances more fundamental than money, power, and maybe even love.



Yasmina Khadra, [*The Attack*](#)

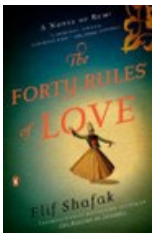
From the graphic, beautifully rendered description of the bombing that opens the novel to the searing conclusion, *The Attack* portrays the reality of terrorism and its incalculable spiritual costs. Intense and humane, devoid of political bias, hatred, and polemics, it probes deep inside the Muslim world and gives readers a profound understanding of what seems impossible to understand.



Amin Maalouf, [*Samarkand*](#)

Accused of mocking the inviolate codes of Islam, the Persian poet and sage Omar Khayyam fortuitously finds sympathy with the very man who is to judge his alleged crimes. Recognizing genius, the judge decides to spare him and gives him instead a small, blank book, encouraging him to confine his thoughts to it alone. Thus begins the seamless blend of fact and fiction that is *Samarkand*. Vividly re-creating the history of the manuscript of the *Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam*, Amin Maalouf spans continents and centuries with breathtaking vision: the dusky exoticism of 11th-century Persia, with its poetesses and assassins; the same country's struggles nine hundred years later, seen through the eyes of an American academic obsessed with finding the original manuscript; and the fated maiden voyage of the Titanic, whose tragedy led to the *Rubaiyyat's* final resting place—all are brought to life with keen assurance by this gifted and award-winning writer.

Facilitator: **Mohamed Defaa (CONTINUED)**



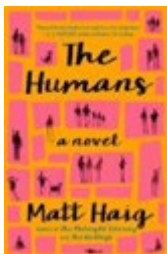
Elif Shafak, [*The Forty Rules of Love*](#)

Ella Rubenstein is forty years old and unhappily married when she takes a job as a reader for a literary agent. Her first assignment is to read and report on *Sweet Blasphemy*, a novel written by a man named Aziz Zahara. Ella is mesmerized by his tale of Shams's search for Rumi and the dervish's role in transforming the successful but unhappy cleric into a committed mystic, passionate poet, and advocate of love. She is also taken with Shams's lessons, or rules, that offer insight into an ancient philosophy based on the unity of all people and religions, and the presence of love in each and every one of us. As she reads on, she realizes that Rumi's story mirrors her own and that Zahara—like Shams—has come to set her free.

LITERATURE

Facilitator: **Alice Fogel**

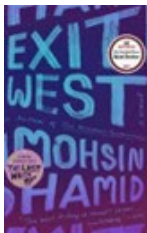
Format Preference: Online or in-Person



Matt Haig, [*The Humans*](#)

This little novel contains a huge heart, a hilarious sense of humor, a portal between sci-fi and psychology, and a mission to prove that life is worth it despite its abundance of misery. The premise: An extraterrestrial arrives on Earth, taking the form of mathematician Andrew Martin, who has just discovered the formula that will allow humans to travel great distances through space in an instant. Since no other being in the Universe wants anything to do with those despicable Earthlings, Martin and anyone associated with him must be destroyed. The visitor is eager to complete this simple task and hurry home to his own utopian planet, but as he begins to discover certain complicating aspects of human life—such as love, music, and poetry—at great risk to his mission, and to himself, he hesitates....

Mohsin Hamid, [*Exit West*](#)



In this rich and bittersweet love story born out of our literally unsettling times and yet for all times, the main characters meet in an unidentified city on the verge of war. As new political fugitives, they follow the global underground network helping refugees flee through a series of doors—or “exits”—that balance between metaphor and symbolism: while desperate people escape one kind of danger through them, they have no way of knowing in what alien city, on what unwelcoming street, in whose strange house, they will find themselves. This book is about upheaval and migration, about the need for connection and security, the human right to make our own choices, and the fears of both those who believe they are losing their stability to intruders, and those who want nothing more than to find a safe home.

Claudia Rankine, [*Citizen: An American Lyric*](#)



A genre-bending meditation on race, racism, and citizenship in 21st-century America. Published in 2014, *Citizen* combines prose, poetry, and images to paint a provocative portrait of the African American experience and racism in the so-called “post-racial” United States.

Facilitator: **Alice Fogel (CONTINUED)**

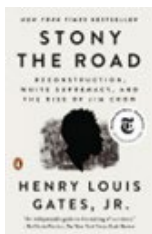


Claudia Rankine, [*Just Us: An American Conversation*](#)
Just Us: An American Conversation is a collection of essays and images exploring racism and white supremacy.

HISTORY

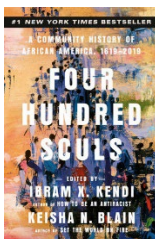
Facilitator: **Mary C. Kelly**

Format Preference: Online or in-Person (Locally)



Henry Louis Gates, Jr. [*Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*](#)

The abolition of slavery in the aftermath of the Civil War is a familiar story, as is the civil rights revolution that transformed the nation after World War II. But the century in between remains a mystery: if emancipation sparked “a new birth of freedom” in Lincoln’s America, why was it necessary to march in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s America? Henry Louis Gates, Jr., one of our leading chroniclers of the African American experience, seeks to answer that question in a history that moves from the Reconstruction Era to the “nadir” of the African American experience under Jim Crow, through to World War I and the Harlem Renaissance. An essential tour through one of America’s fundamental historical tragedies, *Stony the Road* is also a story of heroic resistance, as figures such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Ida B. Wells fought to create a counter-narrative, and culture, inside the lion’s mouth. As sobering as this tale is, it also has within it the inspiration that comes with encountering the hopes our ancestors advanced against the longest odds.

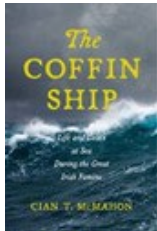


Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain, [*Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019*](#)

Edited by two historians of race and African American history, Ibram X. Kendi, with Keisha N. Blain, *Four Hundred Souls* features readings by familiar names including Nikole Hannah-Jones, Annette Gordon-Reed, Isabel Wilkerson, and Imani Perry. This is a comprehensive collection of short readings on African American history and culture. The editors seek to combat hate through deeper understandings of Black history and experience, and the cultivation of empathy in celebrating Black resilience over the centuries. The book is designed to educate general readers on racial struggles and the role of slavery in American history, using the voices and perspectives of Black writers. It maps the course of enslaved Africans’ forced transport to colonial America, slavery’s institutionalization, sectional pressures prior to the Civil War, Emancipation and codification of the 14th, 15th and 16th Amendments, Reconstruction-era challenges, the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance, and Civil Rights activism and Black Power through to our own time.

Facilitator: **Mary C. Kelly (CONTINUED)**

Cian T. McMahon, [*The Coffin Ship: Life and Death at Sea during the Great Irish Famine*](#)



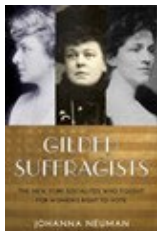
The oceangoing voyage endured by two million Irish escaping the country's Great Famine of the mid-1800s endures as a cornerstone of the modern Irish and Irish American historical narrative. This book traces the epic journey undertaken by destitute Irish smallholders across the Atlantic to Boston and New York and other North American safe harbors. Famine emigrants fleeing Ireland strengthened their chances of survival aboard ship in proactive ways, but ongoing dangers persisted on the voyage and subsequently within the urban immigrant enclaves established by the survivors.

This stirring account transports the reader from destitute fields, ports of departure and seafaring rituals to eventual settlement in American cities for the fortunate survivors. The Atlantic crossing that represented a last hope for so many, and imprinted the Irish immigrant community in North America so powerfully, provides a compelling focus in this accessible historical narrative.

HISTORY and LITERATURE

Facilitator: **Liz Tentarelli**

Format Preference: Online or in-Person



Johanna Neuman, [*Gilded Suffragists*](#)

In the early twentieth century over two hundred of New York's most glamorous socialites joined the suffrage movement and turned a feminist cause into a fashionable revolution.



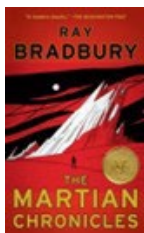
Elaine Weiss, [*The Woman's Hour*](#)

The story of how American women won the right to vote, and the opening campaign in the great twentieth-century battles for civil rights.

PHILOSOPHY and SCI-FI

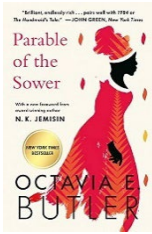
Facilitator: **Joshua Tepley**

Format Preference: Online or in-Person



Ray Bradbury, [*The Martian Chronicles*](#)

A beautiful and haunting collection of short stories about the colonization of Mars.



Octavia Butler, [*Parable of the Sower*](#)

A post-apocalyptic novel of hope and terror by the first great Black woman science fiction writer.

Facilitator: **Joshua Tepley (CONTINUED)**



N. K. Jemisin, [*How Long 'Til Black Future Month?*](#)

These science fiction short stories challenge and delight readers with thought-provoking narratives of destruction, rebirth, and redemption that sharply examine modern society.

Facilitator: **Tammi Truax**

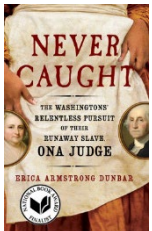
HISTORY and LITERATURE

Format Preference: Online or in-Person

Erica Armstrong Dunbar, [*Never Caught: The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge*](#)

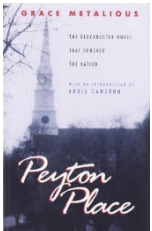
When George Washington was elected president, he reluctantly left behind his beloved Mount Vernon to serve in Philadelphia, the temporary seat of the nation's capital. In setting up his household he brought along nine slaves, including Ona Judge. As the President grew accustomed to Northern ways, there was one change he couldn't abide: Pennsylvania law required enslaved people be set free after six months of residency in the state. Rather than comply, Washington decided to circumvent the law. Every six months he sent the slaves back down south just as the clock was about to expire.

Though Ona Judge lived a life of relative comfort, she was denied freedom. So, when the opportunity presented itself one clear and pleasant spring day in Philadelphia, Judge left everything she knew to escape to New England. Yet freedom would not come without its costs. At just twenty-two-years-old, Ona became the subject of an intense manhunt led by George Washington, who used his political and personal contacts to recapture his property.



Grace Metalious, [*Peyton Place*](#)

First published in 1956, Peyton Place uncovers the passions, lies and cruelties that simmer beneath the surface of a postcard-perfect town. At the centre of the novel are three women, each with a secret to hide: Constance MacKenzie, the original desperate housewife; her daughter Allison, whose dreams are stifled by small-town small-mindedness; and Selena Cross, her gypsy-eyed friend from the wrong side of the tracks.



HOW TO APPLY

- 1.) To apply to host a book group, please download and review the host checklist [here](#).
- 2.) Contact the facilitator to arrange a time and date for your event. Use the list above for current facilitators and books available for discussion groups.
- 3.) Once you have confirmed a book and facilitator, complete the **online application form** [here](#) *at least four weeks* prior to your event or email bookgroups@nhhumanities.org with any questions.
- 4.) New Hampshire Humanities will process your application. This includes arranging payment for the book copies and facilitator's stipend.

Contact Sue Butman at New Hampshire Humanities with questions about setting up your program.

(Email: bookgroups@nhhumanities.org)

