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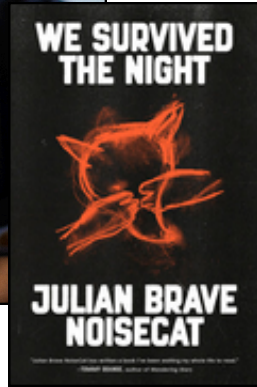
Speakers for the First-Year Experience[®]

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2006
2026

20 Years of Inspiration,
Community, and
Conversation



Julian Brave NoiseCat

Writer, Oscar-nominated filmmaker, and author of *We Survived the Night*

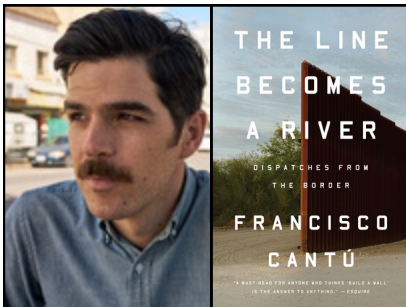
Theme: *Native American and Indigenous Voices and Stories*

"Julian Brave NoiseCat has written a book I've been waiting my whole life to read." — Tommy Orange, author of *Wandering Stars*

"Julian Brave NoiseCat seamlessly connects true tales of identity and betrayal, love and abandonment, clarity and confusion. *We Survived the Night* is a whirling, radiant gift to the reader." — Louise Erdrich, author of *The Night Watchman*

"Invigorating and soul-stirring, *We Survived the Night* is a book whose epic scale—encompassing explorations of history, language, land, and politics, as well as of family bonds, artmaking, and storytelling—astonishes me. It is a tribute, in the end, to love which is intimate and clear-eyed enough to see one's own father and mother, and capacious enough to hold the whole world." — Megha Majumdar, author of *A Guardian and a Thief*

[Speaker at Scripps College](#)



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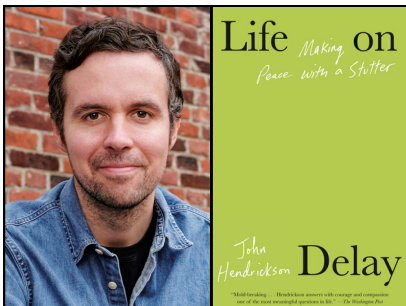
Francisco Cantú

Author of the bestselling memoir *The Line Becomes a River* and former US Border Patrol Agent who speaks on how the border wreaks violence on both sides of the line

Theme: *Hispanic and Latinx Voices & Stories*

"We had a great day with Francisco! He is so gracious and engaging, we couldn't have asked for a better experience." — SUNY College of Brockport

[FYE Speaker at College of Charleston; Luther College; Saint Michael's College; SUNY College of Brockport; University of California, Los Angeles; and West Virginia University](#)



© Matthew Demucco

John Hendrickson

Journalist and author of *Life on Delay*

Theme: *Overcoming Adversity; Disability*

"John was so engaging and really took the time to work with our students during his visit to Otterbein. He spoke on numerous topics, including his stutter, being a journalist, the process of writing the book, obtaining internships, and the future of AI. Many faculty and staff said that John's visit was one of their favorites of our Common Book program."

— Otterbein University

[FYE Speaker at Otterbein University](#)

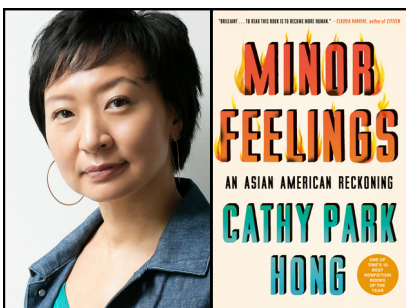


Photo courtesy of the speaker

Cathy Park Hong

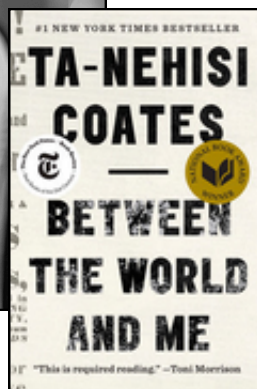
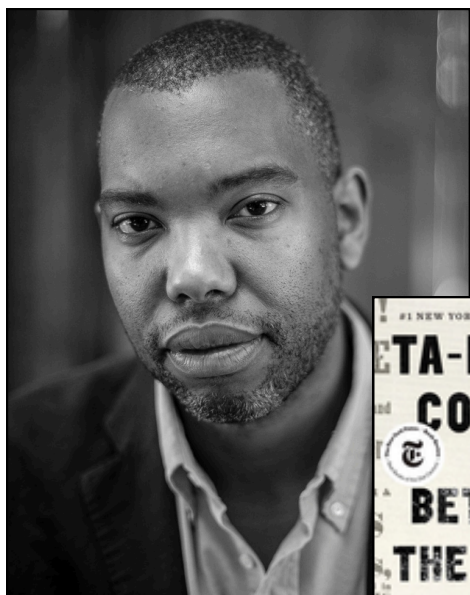
Award-winning poet and *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Minor Feelings*

Theme: *Immigrant, First-generation and Refugee Voices & Stories*

"[Cathy Park Hong's event] was incredible. The last person to ask a question began by saying that 'This entire conversation about art WAS art!' I honestly could not be more happy with the event, and Cathy herself is wonderful in every way."

— University of Richmond

[FYE Speaker at North Hennepin Community College](#)



Ta-Nehisi Coates

Journalist and author of #1 bestselling books, including *Between the World and Me* and *The Message*

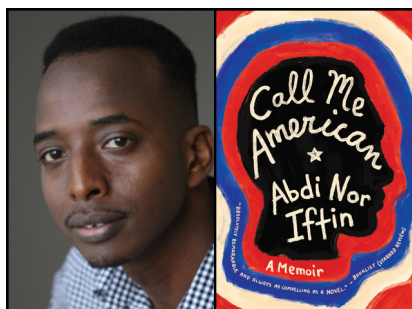
Theme: Social Justice; Global Perspectives; African American Voices and Stories

“Ever since his Baldwin-inflected *Between the World and Me*, Coates has been known for his incisive (and sometimes uncomfortable) cultural and political commentary. Here he journeys from West Africa to the American South to Palestine to examine how the stories we tell can fail us, and to argue that only the truth can bring justice.”

— *The Boston Globe* on *The Message*

“Ta-Nehisi Coates is the James Baldwin of our era. A brilliant thinker at the top of his powers, he has distilled four hundred years of history and his own anguish and wisdom into a prayer for his beloved son and an invocation to the conscience of his country. *Between the World and Me* is an instant classic and a gift to us all.” — Isabel Wilkerson, author of *The Warmth of Other Suns*, on *Between the World and Me*

FYE Speaker at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Norfolk State University, Stanford University, and University of Vermont



Abdi Nor Iffin

Author of *Call Me American* and immigrant rights advocate

Theme: Immigrant, First-generation and Refugee Voices & Stories

“Abdi’s talk was nothing short of fantastic. Honestly, it was my favorite thing I’ve done so far at MCC. He was so eloquent, thoughtful, and down to earth. The audience loved him as well.” — Manchester Community College

FYE Speaker at Illinois College, Manchester Community College, Otterbein University, and West Texas A&M University



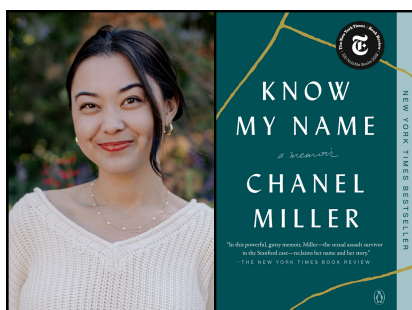
Jedidiah Jenkins

Travel writer, environmental advocate, adventurer, and memoirist

Theme: Family & Community; LGBTQIA+ Voices & Stories

“It’s rare to find the level of honesty and authenticity that Jenkins brings to his audience. In a world of constant noise, his storytelling is piercing in an almost familiar way. He’s managed to home in on that single idea that we all relate to and truly make you feel a part of the experience. This is the type of storytelling the world needs more of.” — Chris Burkard, award-winning photographer, author of *At Glacier’s End*

Speaker at the University of Nebraska



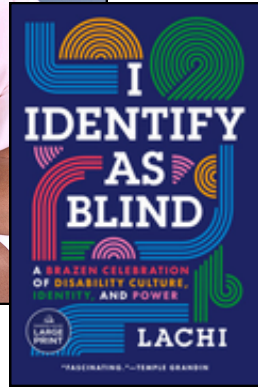
Chanel Miller

Artist, activist, and author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Know My Name*

Theme: Courage; Women’s Voices & Stories

“[Chanel Miller] has gifted all of us with her voice and her truth, and her visit should prompt us to elevate our dialogue about sexual assault and supporting survivors at UC Santa Cruz and beyond....The book has transformed conversations about how we should be approaching education, prevention, and intervention services on and off college campuses around the country.” — University of California, Santa Cruz

FYE Speaker at Des Moines Area Community College, Duke University, Santa Clara University, Seattle University, and Stanford University



Lachi

Award-winning executive, global recording artist, author, and TV host

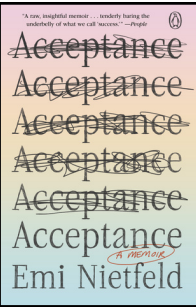
Theme: Disability Culture and Activism

"The audience loved Lachi and her team. Thanks for helping us bring her to USM!" — The University of Southern Mississippi

"This was, hands down, our most impactful No Limits Celebration in the five years we have been bringing this program to life. I am so thankful to Lachi for bringing such an amazing and impactful program to our community." — Indiana Blind Children's Foundation

"We were thrilled to welcome Lachi as a featured speaker to the entire undergraduate student body. Lachi serves as a wonderful role model for musicians and industry professionals of any color, gender, genre, or ability, and we are so grateful that she shared her time and her story with our students." — New York University

Speaker at New York University and the University of Southern Mississippi



Emi Nietfeld

Software engineer, writer, and author of Acceptance

Theme: Resilience & Perseverance

"She was amazing; Transparent, honest, raw, and very personable. She was captivating and shared her journey openly. She was a great inspiration." — Porterville College

"Emi was an amazing speaker that is a wonderful voice for students and the importance of facilitation and champions along a student's journey." — Independent Educational Consultants Association

FYE Speaker at Defiance College



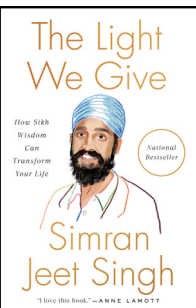
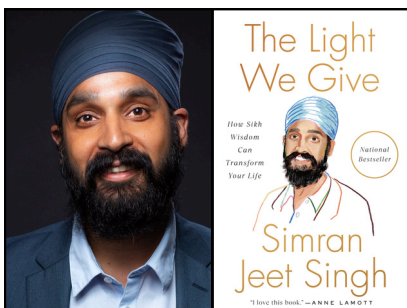
Sister Helen Prejean

Leading advocate for the abolition of the death penalty

Theme: Service & Altruism

"Sister Helen Prejean is one of the great moral leaders of our time. With her landmark book, she turned the world's attention to the injustices of the death penalty ... A born storyteller, she leads you, with her fierce intelligence and lively wit, from her entrance into a novitiate [...] to the initial stirrings of understanding what 'social justice' meant in action. Hers is a life to celebrate and honor."—James Martin, SJ, author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*

Speaker at Arcadia University; Brown University; Colorado College; Mount Saint Mary's University, Los Angeles; and University of California, Santa Barbara



Simran Jeet Singh

Motivational speaker, author, and human rights activist

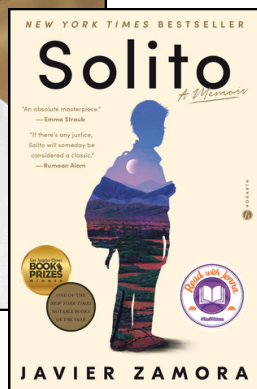
Theme: Asian American and Pacific Islander Voices and Stories

"While our students truly resonated with the message in the book, his visit truly brought his words to life. The attention and care that Dr. Singh generously gave to each audience and each individual student was truly unique. He was kind, genuine, and approachable and students felt welcomed to engage with him about his book, about Sikhism, and about life. For days after he left, folks would catch me on the sidewalk and thank me for bringing him to our campus community." — Otterbein University

FYE Speaker at Otterbein University



© Jennifer del Valle



Javier Zamora

Memoirist, poet, and author of *Solito*, and a winner of the 2023 American Book Award

Theme: Immigrant & First-Generation Stories

“Javier’s refreshing authenticity made our university’s Commencement one to remember.” — Dominican University

“It was absolutely phenomenal! Such a raw & heartfelt conversation about the immigrant experience, which MANY of our students can relate to. It was wonderful and I appreciate all your assistance behind the scenes!” — Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

“By chronicling the journey of his nine-year-old self in beautiful, painstaking verisimilitude, Javier Zamora has elevated the ‘child migrant story’ to new literary heights.” — Jose Antonio Vargas, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, founder of Define American, and bestselling author of *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen*

FYE Speaker at Luther College, the University of Missouri, and Regis University



© Cheryl Strayed

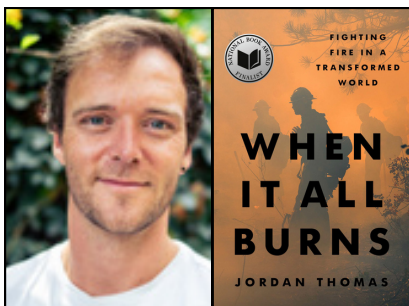
Cheryl Strayed

Author of the #1 *New York Times*-bestselling memoir *Wild* and “Dear Sugar” columnist

Theme: Inspiration & Resilience

“Our evening with Cheryl Strayed was transcendent. We had people that had driven over a hundred miles to be there. Many from the audience came up to me afterwards filled with gratitude for her words and for her presence. She inspired us all, and it is an evening none are soon to forget. The generosity, beauty, and humanity found in Cheryl Strayed’s prose were echoed in every interaction she had—whether speaking to hundreds or chatting with one. A beautiful night!” — Utah State University

FYE Speaker at Onondaga Community College, Sacred Heart University, University of Montana, and University of Portland



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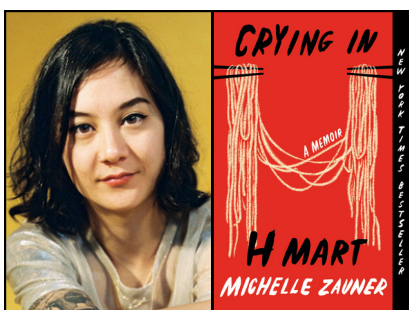
Jordan Thomas

Anthropologist, former wildland firefighter, and author of the National Book Award finalist *When It All Burns*

Theme: Climate Change

“In this engrossing work on wildfires and the environment, Thomas skillfully weaves together how historical events, genocide, politics, and the logging industry have all contributed to climate change, creating megafires throughout the American West.” — *Library Journal*

“A riveting story of the costs of climate change and the realities of this terrifying work, as well as an examination of the history that got us here and the very real lives now at risk.” — *The New York Times*



© Helene Chan

Michelle Zauner

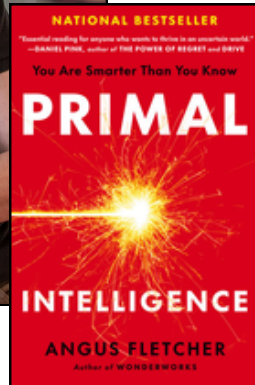
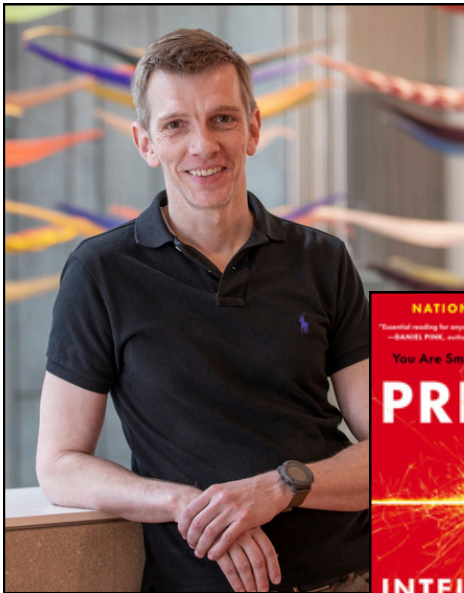
Frontwoman of Japanese Breakfast, author of *New York Times*-bestselling *Crying in H Mart*

Theme: Family & Community; Asian American and Pacific Islander Voices and Stories

“The day was a great success!” — Northwestern University

“Michelle is incredibly kind, generous and a true rock star in every sense of the word. She presents the perfect balance of authenticity, vulnerability, humor, and cool.” — Cuyahoga County Public Library

FYE Speaker at Northwestern University, upcoming at University of California, Santa Barbara



Angus Fletcher

Professor of Story Science and author of *Primal Intelligence*

Theme: Life Skills

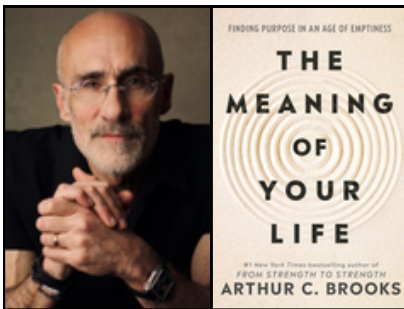
“Groundbreaking.”—U.S. Army

“*Primal Intelligence* delivers a fascinating exploration of human potential that will change how you think about thinking. With virtuosic range, Fletcher reveals why Shakespeare matters to Navy SEALs, what van Gogh can teach us about innovation, how Marie Curie’s intuition transformed, and much more. This book is essential reading for anyone who wants to thrive in an uncertain world.”

— Daniel Pink, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Power of Regret and Drive*

“*Primal Intelligence* confirms what I have long suspected about Angus Fletcher. He has never had an uninteresting thought.”

— Malcolm Gladwell



Arthur C. Brooks

Harvard professor, PhD social scientist, #1 *New York Times*-bestselling author

Theme: Being Connected

“Arthur Brooks is one of my very favorite thinkers. Witty, wise, and insatiably curious, he is one of the few intellectuals who can reliably weave scientific research and everyday observations into what we all really need: succinct advice for a good life.”

— Angela Duckworth, Founder and CEO of Character Lab and author of *Grit*

FYE Speaker at the University of Mississippi



Dr. Ingrid Clayton

Licensed clinical psychologist, trauma therapist, and author of *Fawning*

Theme: Life Skills, Trauma

“Dr. Ingrid Clayton offers a compassionate and insightful look at one of the most misunderstood trauma responses. Drawing from both clinical expertise and personal experience, she gives voice to those who learned to survive by being agreeable, invisible, and accommodating. This book is a powerful revelation for anyone who has ever mistaken being ‘nice’ for being safe. *Fawning* is an essential guide to understanding yourself more deeply and stepping into your full truth.”

— Nedra Glover Tawwab, *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Set Boundaries, Find Peace*



Jenny Odell

New York Times-bestselling author of *How to Do Nothing* and *Saving Time*

Theme: Life Skills

“This fiercely generous book by Jenny Odell invites us to exit the superhighways and explore the scenic detours, byways, rebel camps, the other visions of who we can be while reminding us that slowness can yield more than speed.” — Rebecca Solnit, author of *Men Explain Things to Me* and *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*

FYE Speaker at Stanford University



Kaitlyn Regehr, Ph.D.

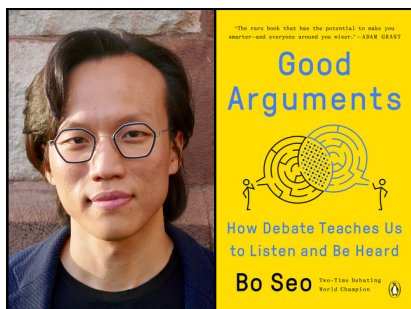
Professor, digital literacy expert, and author of *Smartphone Nation*

Theme: Life Skills

"A candid, rigorous, and witty read on how to stop digital devices from wreaking havoc on our lives. As a leading expert on social media and internet policy, Kaitlyn Regehr illuminates what we can do—individually and collectively—to put our smartphones in their place." — Adam Grant, #1 *New York Times* bestselling-author of *Think Again* and host of the podcast *Re:Thinking*

"In a time of disconnection and isolation, this book is what the world needs." — Dr. Dana Suskind, *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Thirty Million Words* and *Parent Nation*

"If you've ever wondered how a device in your pocket became the engine of both connection and control, *Smartphone Nation* is essential reading. Regehr unpacks how smartphones have rewired our democracy, our privacy, and even our activism. You'll finish eager to reclaim your power and show that ordinary people can use the tools of the tech age to demand more: more transparency, more justice, more community." — Shannon Watts, *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Fired Up*



Bo Seo

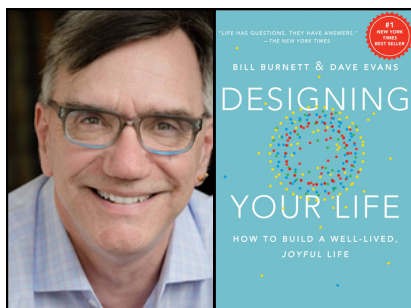
Two-time world champion debater and author of *Good Arguments*

Theme: Life Skills

"Bo Seo was remarkable. Our students found him to be an exceptional listener."
— Marquette University

"Bo was a terrific speaker—interacted with the audience throughout, great on his feet, spoke without notes, extremely articulate. He's got the perfect message ("How to Disagree Better") for college students today." — The University of Virginia

Speaker at Marquette University and the University of Virginia



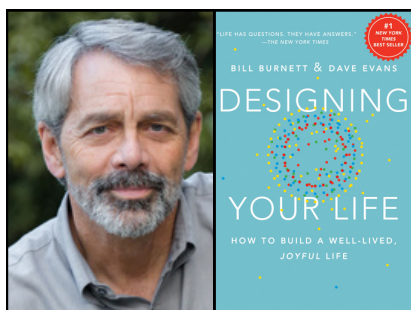
Bill Burnett

Executive Director of the Design Program at Stanford and co-author of the #1 *New York Times*-bestselling book *Designing Your Life*

Theme: Life Skills

"Life has questions. They have answers...Learn how to find a fulfilling career...learn how to better navigate life's big moment decisions and kill your 'wicked problems dead.'"
— *The New York Times*

FYE Speaker at Arizona State University and Wichita State



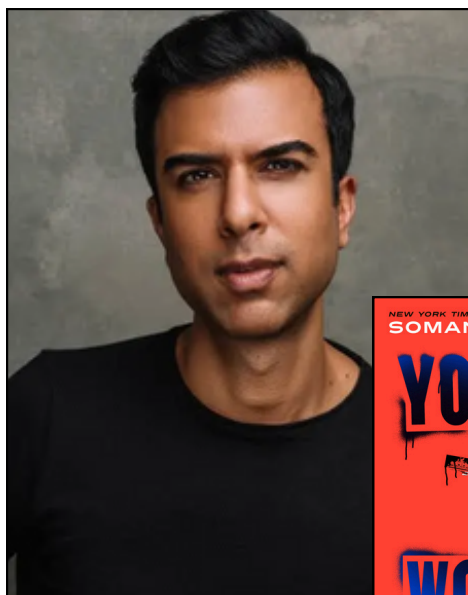
Dave Evans

Co-author of the #1 *New York Times*-bestselling book *Designing Your Life*

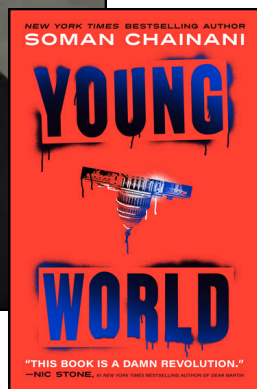
Theme: Life Skills

"Dave's visit was extremely successful with much positive feedback from students, faculty, and staff. Dave's high energy, magnetism, and deep knowledge thrilled the Cornell Dyson community; all enjoyed interacting with him and hearing his unique perspectives on the lifelong and lifewide applications of design thinking."
— Cornell University

FYE Speaker at Boston College, Cornell University, and East Carolina University



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Soman Chainani

Filmmaker and *New York Times*-bestselling author

Theme: *Coming of Age*

"The perfect read for our tumultuous times."—Veronica Roth, #1 *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Divergent*

"I devoured this book in one sitting. Part *Hunger Games*, part John Green, *Young World* is a fast-paced thrill ride. Utterly unforgettable."—Lynn Painter, #1 *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Better Than the Movies*

"Soman Chainani has become the voice of a generation. An intimate, stirring coming of age tale and a rip-roaring political fantasy, a mix of *House of Cards* and *Hunger Games*, leaving readers with the question: In a world where our leaders already act like children, why not just elect one?"—Sam Koppelman, *New York Times*-bestselling co-author of *Our Unfinished March*



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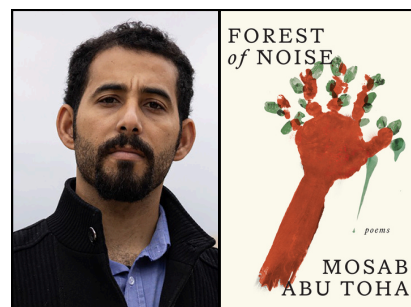
Kaveh Akbar

Poet and author of the National Book Award-nominated novel *Martyr!*

Theme: *Middle Eastern Voices & Stories*

"The best novel you'll ever read about the joy of language, addiction, displacement, martyrdom, belonging, homesickness."—Lauren Groff, bestselling author of *Matrix* and *Fates and Furies*

"This book does everything. It is so entirely funny and sad and true and beautiful. Kaveh Akbar is one of my favorite writers. Ever."—Tommy Orange, author of *There There* and *Wandering Stars*



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Mosab Abu Toha

Pulitzer Prize-winning Palestinian Poet

Theme: *Poetry; Middle Eastern Voices & Stories*

"Mosab's event was completely amazing, and he was incredibly generous with the students....He got a standing ovation from a full house at the end of his talk—something I have never before seen in my ten years of Living Writers events."—Colgate University

Speaker at Arizona State University; Columbia University; Colgate University; Cornell University; Georgetown University; Harvard University; Princeton University; Stanford University; University of California, Davis; and University of Pittsburgh



© Emma Finn

Brit Bennett

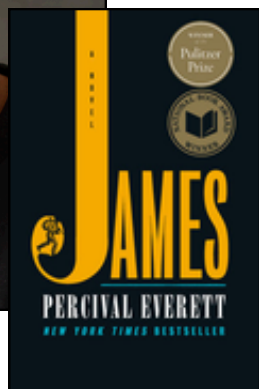
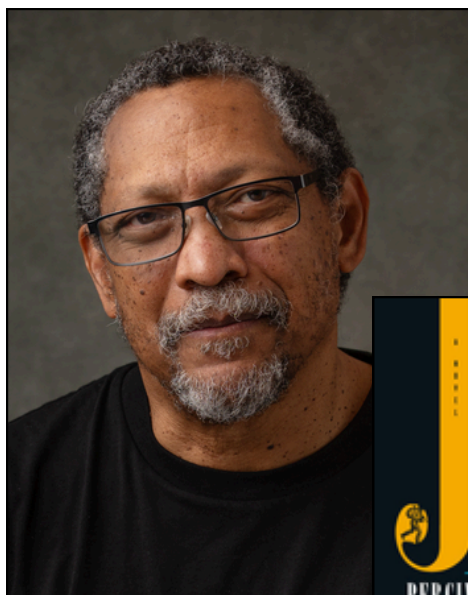
Novelist of the National Book Award nominated bestseller, *The Vanishing Half*

Theme: *Black Voices & Stories*

"The students loved her! Some of them asked amazing questions and she answered them very well."—Loyola University Maryland

"We could not have been happier with all aspects of this event, from the informal conversation, to the Q and A, to the stunning convocation address."—Luther College

FYE Speaker at Loyola University Maryland, Luther College, and University of Miami



Percival Everett

Author of the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-winning novel *James*

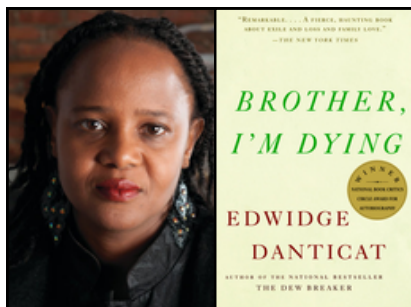
Theme: Black Voices & Stories

“Percival’s campus visit was a huge success! Attendance was the highest it has been in many years! He was extremely engaging with students, faculty and staff, and community members. I have only heard overwhelming positive feedback.”

— University of Wisconsin, Madison

“We thought Percival was incredible—he was very gracious and generous with all of our asks (signing books, meeting with students, talking with VIPs, conversing with our faculty interviewer at the main event). He was thoughtful, engaging, and moving in his responses at the main event, and he left everyone wanting more (in a good way!). The audience did not want to see him go off of the stage.”

— University of California, Santa Cruz
 FYE Speaker at [Clemson University](#); [Duke University](#); [Indiana University Northwest](#); [University of California, Santa Cruz](#); and [University of Wisconsin, Madison](#)



Edwidge Danticat

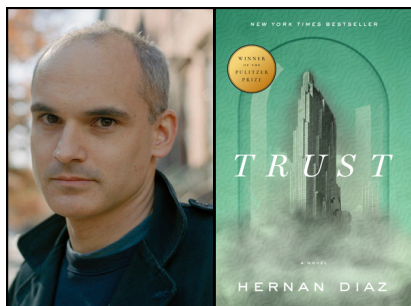
MacArthur Fellow and critically acclaimed Haitian-American writer

Theme: Caribbean Voices & Stories; Immigrant, First-Generation and Refugee Voices

“Edwidge was a phenomenally generous speaker, engaging with our students with such kindness, patience, and grace. She made each interaction meaningful and joyful, and created a specific presentation for our program that thoughtfully considered its goals of outreach and connection to our BIPOC students. Wonderful.”

— Anoka-Ramsey Community College

FYE Speaker at [Anoka-Ramsey Community College](#), [Bunker Hill Community College](#), [Onondaga Community College](#), [Stanford University](#), [Susquehanna University](#), [University of Kansas](#), [University of St. Thomas](#), and [Whitman College](#)



Hernan Diaz

Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Trust* and *In the Distance*

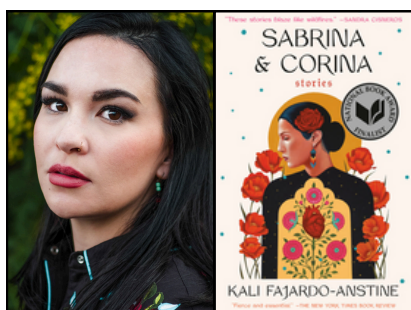
Theme: Life Stories

“Hernan Diaz was fantastic! He really charmed our audience with his humor and warmth, and offered great analysis of his book, *Trust*. He was an excellent speaker.”

— Butler University

“I can’t say how much we enjoyed having him and how much my students and the audience got out of his visit.” — University of California, Santa Cruz

FYE Speaker at [University of California, Santa Cruz](#)



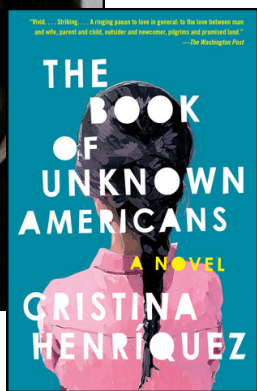
Kali Fajardo-Anstine

National Book Award Finalist and author of *Sabrina & Corina* and *Woman of Light*

Theme: Hispanic and Latinx Voices & Stories

“We are still basking in the glow from Kali’s visit, which we thoroughly enjoyed and learned from. Thank you so much to Kali for visiting us and engaging with everyone so readily while she was here.” — Mississippi State University

FYE Speaker at [Metropolitan State University](#), [Regis University](#), and [Vassar College](#)



Cristina Henríquez

Author of *The Book of Unknown Americans* and *The Great Divide*

Theme: Hispanic Voices & Stories; Immigrant, First-generation and Refugee Voices & Stories

"Ms. Henríquez was incredibly inspiring, particularly the portion when she talked about growing up not speaking Spanish—it resonated with our primarily Latinx students who were listening to her speak. We truly thank her for everything she shared and being authentic to our students."

— Porterville College

"Our best event yet. The book turned out to be the perfect choice for our semester-long conversation about immigration—it allowed a bit of cover for our population who live the realities of the situation and a moment of empathy for those who don't." — Cardinal Stritch University

FYE Speaker at Bunker Hill Community College; California State University, Fullerton; Cardinal Stritch University; East Stroudsburg University; Gettysburg College; Grinnell College; Henderson State University; Molloy College; Mount Holyoke; Pacific University; Smith College; Stony Brook University; SUNY Oneonta; Tarrant County College; The College of New Jersey; University of Alabama; University of Houston-Clear Lake; University of Idaho; University of North Carolina at Charlotte; University of Tennessee, Knoxville; and Western Carolina University



Lauren Groff

National Book Award finalist and bestselling author of *Fates and Furies*, *Florida*, and *Matrix*

Theme: Family, Short Fiction

"It was amazing. Lauren is spectacular, and everyone was talking about how utterly delightful she was. It was a day we won't soon forget!" — Notre Dame of Maryland University

"Lauren was dazzling." — Colorado State University

"Lauren's visit will be remembered — vividly and fondly — for years." — Texas State University

FYE Speaker at Flagler University



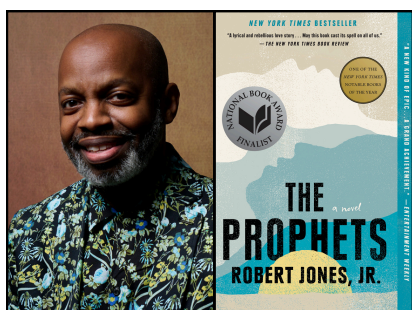
Yaa Gyasi

Author of *Homegoing* and *Transcendent Kingdom*

Theme: Black Voices & Stories

"Yaa was amazing, and exceptionally thoughtful in her conversation with our moderator and the student questions." — Northeastern University

FYE Speaker at College of St. Scholastica; Davidson College; Hood College; Northeastern University; Notre Dame of Maryland University; Rutgers University; Simmons University; The College of Wooster; Tulane University; University of California, Santa Cruz; University of Massachusetts, Boston; University of Portland; University of Southern Alabama; and West Virginia University



Robert Jones, Jr.

Creator of *Son of Baldwin* and author of *The Prophets*

Theme: Black Voices & Stories

"Robert Jones, Jr. was a superb speaker who prepared a serious lecture specifically for this event. He was responsive, open, and generous in the virtual class session with Marygrove high school students, who asked wonderful questions and received thoughtful answers. The lecture audience was very much taken with him."

— Marygrove Conservancy

FYE Speaker at Vassar College



Emily St. John Mandel

Author of National Book Award finalist *Station Eleven* and *Sea of Tranquility*

Theme: Overcoming Adversity

“Emily was fantastic! She is smart, thoughtful, engaging, and honest. Our students and community members were all in awe of her answers to the questions she was asked. She stayed to sign every single person’s book as well, which meant a lot to the attendees.”
— University of Montana

“Everything went extremely well—better than extremely well. Our lecture had our largest ever turnout—around 700 people, and the students seemed very much engaged with the book—and the author. Ms. Mandel was wonderful—learned, intellectual, and intense—but also very kind and patient with the students (her fans).”
— Southern Methodist University

FYE Speaker at Bucknell University; Collin College; Gettysburg College; Missouri State University; Rutgers University; Saint Michael’s College; Southern Methodist University; Stockton University; the United States Air Force Academy; University of Montana; University of St. Thomas; University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Virginia Tech; West Virginia State University; and Western Michigan University



Rachel Khong

Award-winning author of *Goodbye, Vitamin* and *Real Americans*

Theme: Family & Community; Asian American Voices & Stories

“Khong masterfully explores a family splintered by science, struggling to redefine their own lives after uncovering harrowing secrets. *Real Americans* is a mesmerizing multigenerational novel about privilege, identity and the illusions of the American dream.” — Brit Bennett, author of *The Vanishing Half*



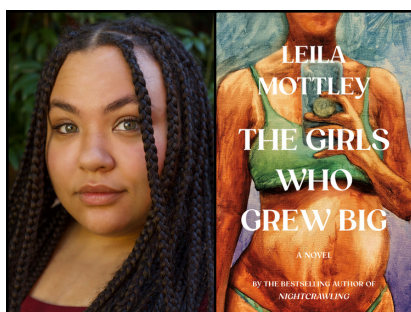
Patricia Lockwood

Award-winning author of *Goodbye, Vitamin* and *Real Americans*

Theme: Life Stories

“We had an extraordinary day with Patricia Lockwood. We were all enriched as she graciously shared her thoughts and processes that embody her brilliance.”
— Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures

Upcoming Speaker at Butler University



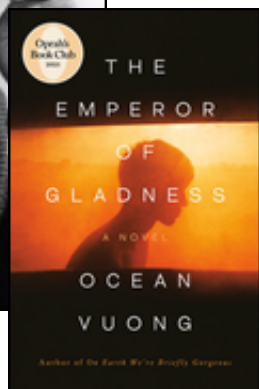
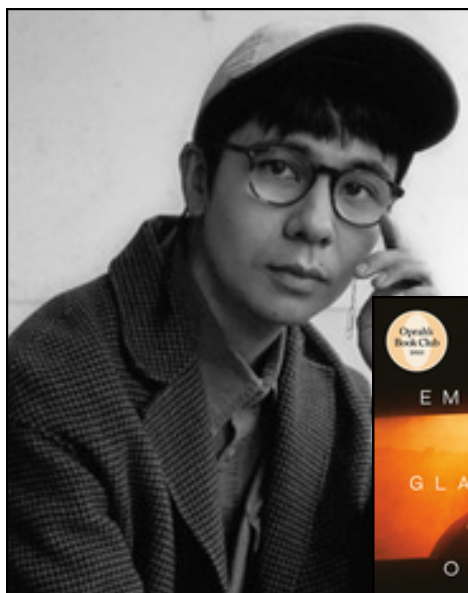
Leila Mottley

Award-winning author of *Nightcrawling* and *The Girls Who Grew Big*, and former Youth Poet Laureate of Oakland

Theme: Family & Community; Black Voices & Stories

“Wonderful! Leila Mottley was so poised, clear, and moving.” — City College of San Francisco, Women’s and Gender Studies Department

Speaker at San Jose State University and City College of San Francisco



Ocean Vuong

MacArthur Fellow and New York Times–bestselling author of *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* and *The Emperor of Gladness*

Theme: Asian American Voices & Stories

“[Ocean] was mesmerizing. Truly an unforgettable evening.”
— Rutgers University

“A huge success. The evening was absolutely delightful and the pick-me-up that so many of us really needed. Such an engaging and thoughtful discussion.” — University of South Florida

“Ocean was absolutely amazing. What a thoughtful, generous, well-prepared talk. I am bowled over.” — Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures

Speaker at Boston College; Bowdoin College; Brown University; Centre College; Colby College; Elon University; Northwest College of Art; Rutgers University; San Jose State University; Tufts University; University of California, Berkeley; University of California, San Diego; University of California, Santa Barbara; University of Kansas; University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; University of South Florida; University of Texas, Austin; and University of Wisconsin-Madison



Celeste Ng

Author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *Everything I Never Told You*, *Little Fires Everywhere*, and more

Theme: Asian American Voices & Stories

“The students were so excited to meet Celeste and hear her read. She was gracious and so generous with her time and her thoughts. This is something our students will never forget.” — Francis Marion University

FYE Speaker at Baruch College, College of the Canyons, Owens Community College, Pomona College, and Regis College



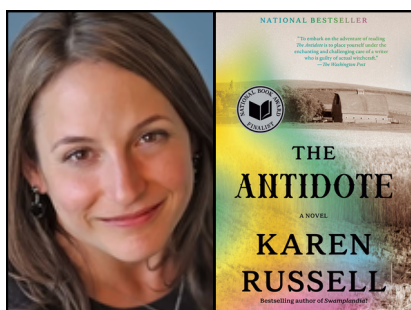
Tommy Orange

MacArthur Fellow, bestselling novelist and author of *There There* and *Wandering Stars*

Theme: Native American and Indigenous Voices & Stories

“An amazing speaker—so thoughtful, hilarious, and very gracious.”
— The University of Chicago

FYE Speaker at the California State University, Channel Islands; Cardinal Stritch University; Cuesta College; Cuyahoga Community College; College of William & Mary; Fort Lewis College; Frederick Community College; MIT; Montana State University; Reedley College; South Dakota State University; SUNY Oswego; University of California, Irvine; University of California, Santa Cruz; and Yavapai College



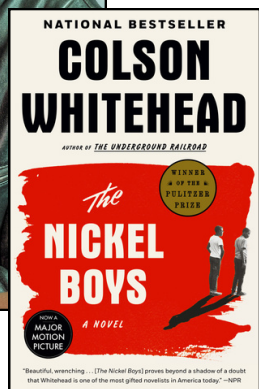
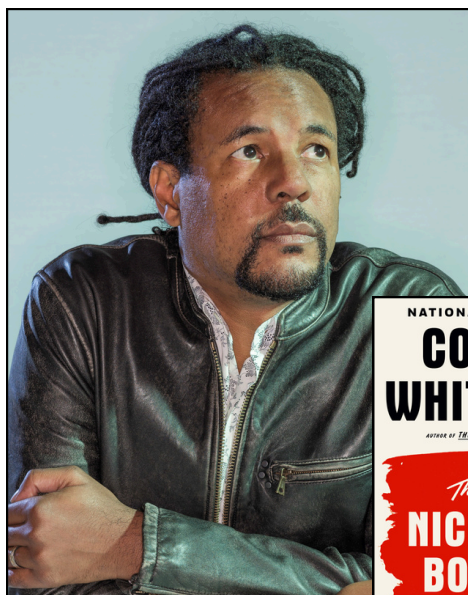
Karen Russell

MacArthur winner and bestselling author of *Swamplandia!*, *Orange World*, and *The Antidote*

Theme: Life Stories, Short Fiction

“Karen was a DREAM to work with! We had an amazing week. Karen gave us a renewed energy for our program, and students really responded to her—first by reading her work beforehand and then in talking with her in their classes. She’s earned some fans for life!”
— Chattanooga State Community College

FYE Speaker at Chattanooga State Community College and Northwestern University



Colson Whitehead

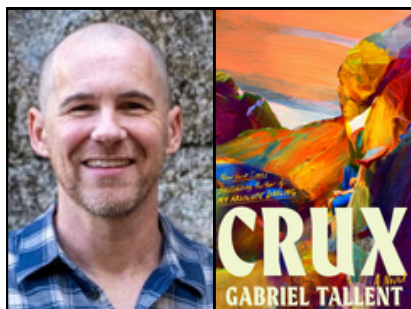
Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-winning author of *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys*

Theme: Black Voices & Stories

“Colson was a delight. We received tons of feedback from faculty, staff, students, and the local community. Everyone raved about his presentation, saying things like, ‘He was hilarious!’ ‘No wonder his books are so good,’ and ‘best Weis Lecture ever.’”
— Bucknell University

“Colson Whitehead was outstanding—thoughtful, generous, and engaging throughout his visit. His dry wit, humility, and candor struck a perfect balance, making both the award ceremony and the craft talk feel deeply personal and intellectually rich. Audience members, including faculty, students, and community guests, repeatedly praised his ability to speak meaningfully about serious topics while maintaining approachability and a great sense of humor. Our students in particular were energized by his insights into the writing process and the role of fiction in reflecting historical truth. It was an unforgettable experience.”— Saint Louis University

FYE Speaker at Bucknell University; Centre College; Ohio University; Otterbein University; Rutgers University, Camden; Saint Louis University; University of Arkansas, Fort Smith; University of Delaware; and Williston State University



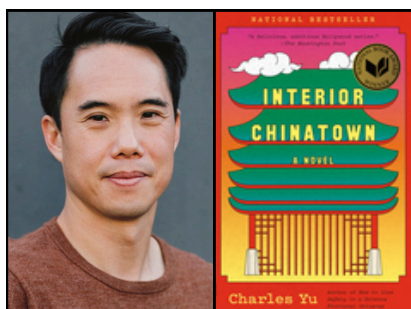
Gabriel Tallent

New York Times–bestselling author of *My Absolute Darling* and *Crux*

Theme: Coming of Age

“*Crux* pulsates with ambition, intensity, passion for the natural world, and devotion to life’s biggest questions.” — *The Boston Globe*

“*Crux* is one of the best novels I’ve ever read about friendship between a young man and a young woman. It’s also exciting and tension-filled. Sharply written and full of controlled emotion.” — #1 *New York Times*-bestselling author Stephen King



Charles Yu

National Book Award-winning author of *Interior Chinatown*

Theme: Asian American and Pacific Islander Voices and Stories

“Charles was fantastic! Funny, charming, and insightful at the same time. Everyone I talked to loved his keynote and can’t wait to read the book and to watch his Hulu series. He was also quick to tie in our work and mission and where we align into his speech. I have heard nothing but good things about his speech.” — APIA Scholars

FYE Speaker at Connecticut College; Santa Rosa Junior College; Stony Brook University; University of California, Berkeley; and West Virginia University



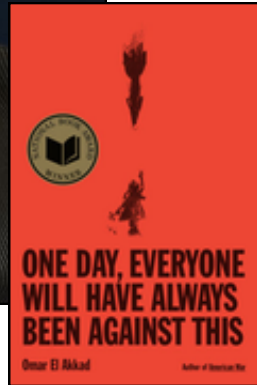
Gabrielle Zevin

New York Times–bestselling author of *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*

Theme: Coming of Age; Overcoming Adversity; Life Stories

“Gabrielle Zevin was beyond wonderful. Her talk was funny, poignant, and engaging and really connected with our community.” — Literary Arts, Inc.

FYE Speaker at Flagler College and Reedley College



Omar El Akkad

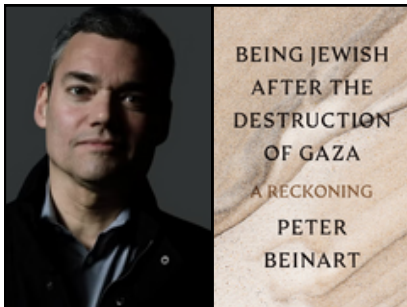
Author of *American War* and *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*, winner of the 2025 National Book Award

Theme: Social Justice; Immigrant, First-generation and Refugee Voices & Stories

"We truly could not have asked for a better experience. Omar was so engaging, kind, and open to our students—he stayed for almost an hour after his presentation in the evening to answer questions from students. The entire day was wonderful, and we couldn't have asked for a better selection with a better author. Thank you for helping us make this happen!" — Flagler College

"From the traditional freshman, to the tenured faculty, Omar had us on the edge of our seats and very engaged. He is a rare author who can engage anyone on many different topics. For these reasons he was a complete success as a common book author! Mr. El Akkad has resurrected the idea of a 'Public Intellectual' and made his audience understand the need for these types of citizens in our society. He, and his visit, made our community of scholars stronger and more engaged in thought." — University of Alabama

[FYE Speaker at Flagler College and University of Alabama](#)



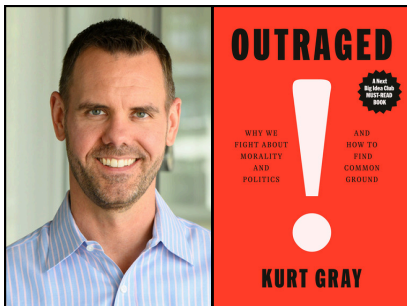
Peter Beinart

Journalist, political commentator, and professor

Theme: Social Justice, Jewish Voices & Stories

"Peter was incredibly engaging. We've never seen an event with so much participation." — Cornell University

"At this painful moment, Peter Beinart's voice is more vital than ever. This book is not just about being Jewish in the shadow of today's war, but about being a person who cares for justice." — Adam Hochschild, author of *American Midnight* and *King Leopold's Ghost*
[Speaker at Boston University; Cornell University; Pennsylvania State University; Stanford University; University of Wisconsin, Madison; and Washington and Lee University](#)

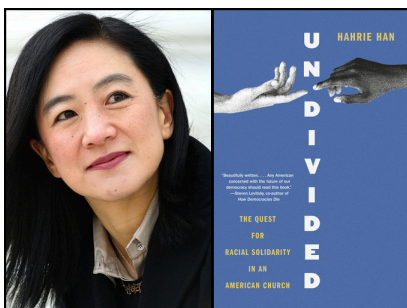


Kurt Gray

Social psychologist and author of *Outraged!*

Theme: Critical Thinking; Ethics; Life Skills

"A riveting read on the roots of our bitterest conflicts—and the remedies for them. One of the leading lights in moral psychology overturns widespread assumptions about why we're divided and reveals how we can come together." — Adam Grant, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Think Again* and host of the podcast *Re: Thinking*



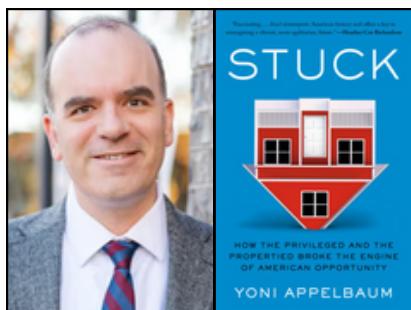
Hahrie Han

MacArthur Fellow, political scientist, Director of SNF Agora Institute, and leading expert on social movements

Theme: Civics & Democracy; Race & Cultural Identity in America

"A masterful feat of elegant storytelling and rigorous research, *Undivided* invigorates readers with an astonishing example of what it takes to make real change, even in the context of deep polarization and racialized subjugation."
—Jennifer Parker, editor of *Hammer & Hope*

[Speaker at St. Olaf College, Villanova University, Wellesley College, upcoming at Marquette University and NYU School of Law](#)



Yoni Appelbaum

Historian, deputy executive editor at *The Atlantic*, and author of *Stuck*

Theme: American History; Economic Mobility

“Yoni Appelbaum offers readers an essential lens for understanding opportunity in America. In a rich and deeply researched tour of the country’s social and economic trajectory, he illustrates that geographic mobility is dynamism—change embodied—and without it, we remain mired in the status quo.”—Clayton Page Aldern, author of *The Weight of Nature* and *Homelessness Is a Housing Problem*



Matthew F. Delmont

Historian and author of *Half American* and *Until the Last Gun is Silent*

Theme: Black History

“Engaging, intellectual, thorough.” — Cuyahoga Community College

“A remarkable and revelatory book. Delmont uses the stories of Coretta Scott King, along with many others, to give us a fresh look at the high and lasting costs of the Vietnam War and how Black Americans, as they did before and do now, navigated the tension between patriotism and protest, Americanism and activism.” — Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

FYE Speaker at Cuyahoga Community College



Dr. Ibram X. Kendi

National Book Award-winning historian and #1 *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Stamped from the Beginning*, *How to Be an Antiracist*, and more

Theme: Black American History

“Ibram’s lecture was engaging, entertaining, and inspiring.” — Georgia State University

“Dr. Kendi gave a first-rate talk which conveyed to the audience his mastery of his subject matter and interest in educating.” — Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries

FYE Speaker at Arcadia University, Bowie State University, Colby College, and Minnesota State Colleges



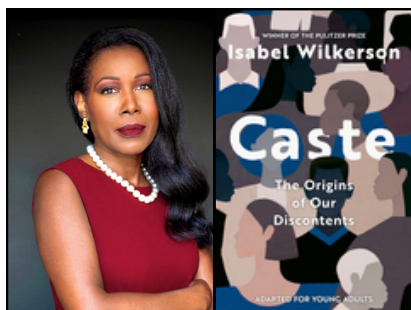
Denise Kiernan

Journalist, producer, and *New York Times*-bestselling author of *The Girls of Atomic City*

Theme: Women’s Voices & Stories

“She has a real gift for connecting with her audience—not an easy task. [...] The consensus of the people I’ve talked to who are series ‘regulars’ is that she is at the very top of all the many speakers in the entire eleven-year history of the program—a sentiment with which I fully concur.”

— University of Mary Washington, Great Lives Lecture Series



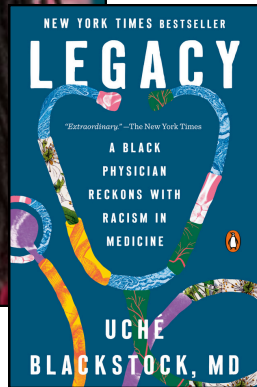
Isabel Wilkerson

Pulitzer Prize winner and acclaimed author of *The Warmth of Other Suns* and *Caste*

Theme: Inequality

“The Morehouse campus is simply buzzing from Isabel’s lecture. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators all attended and were impressed not only by her extensive research but also by her kindness and humility. She reminded us all that the push for freedom continued long after slavery.” — Morehouse College

FYE Speaker at Agnes Scott College, the City College of New York, Dallas College, Lansing Community College, Norfolk State University, Queens University of Charlotte, Stetson University, Tufts University, University of Chicago, and Wells College



Dr. Uché Blackstock

Founder and CEO of Advancing Health Equity, emergency physician, and *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Legacy*

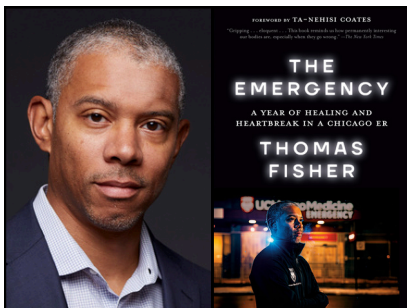
Theme: Black Voices & Stories; Women's Voices & Stories

"Dr. Blackstock's visit was amazing! Our students LOVED her – so many students said that *Legacy* made them feel seen, and that it meant a lot to hear her speak and get to have conversations with her. They were really excited to get their books signed, too! I really think her visit had a huge impact on our students and faculty as well. It brought the community together and sparked some great discussions on campus and in the classroom." — Simmons University

"*Legacy* is an illuminating and stirring journey of a book. The illuminating: the devastating cycle of racism in our healthcare system. The stirring: the inimitable family and career of Dr. Uché Blackstock and her quest to dismantle medical racism."

— Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, #1 *New York Times*-bestselling author

FYE Speaker at Simmons University



Dr. Thomas Fisher

Emergency room physician and author of *The Emergency: A Year of Healing and Heartbreak in a Chicago ER*

Theme: Black Voices & Stories; Inequality

"With scalpel-like precision and searing patient stories, Thomas Fisher exposes the battlefield of medicine and the scarring—and often fatal—wounds of inequality. *The Emergency* is a bat call. Health care doesn't care, inequality kills, and we must do better."

— Dr. Mona Hanna, author of *What the Eyes Don't See*

FYE Speaker at Randolph-Macon College



Dr. Mona Hanna

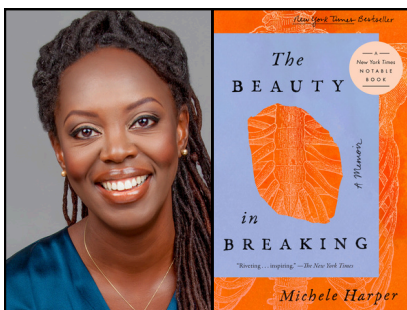
Physician, scientist and activist who exposed the Flint water crisis

Theme: Courage; Overcoming Adversity; Social Justice

"Dr. Mona was truly magnificent. (...) If other universities are considering bringing Dr. Mona to their campus, I would encourage them to invite her, in a heartbeat."

— Bowling Green State University

FYE Speaker at College of St. Scholastica, Colorado State University, Connecticut College, Donnelly College, D'youville University, Gannon University, Loyola University Maryland, Otterbein University, Northeastern University, Simmons University, Texas State University, Tufts University, the University of Iowa, the University of Maryland, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, Utah Valley University, and more



Dr. Michele Harper

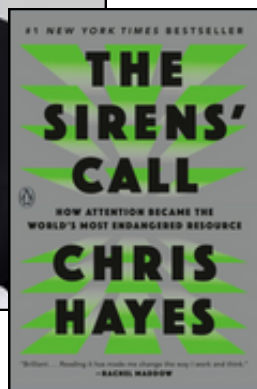
Emergency room physician and author of *The Beauty in Breaking*

Theme: Black Voices & Stories; Women's Voices & Stories

"[Dr. Michele Harper's] reading and fireside conversation offered an honest and insightful perspective into the healthcare industry and the act of writing. Her discussions of systemic harm and collective care especially moved and inspired our students – those in the medical humanities, healthcare professions, and creative writing – to see the power of stories and envision career paths that might make healthcare more human."

— Elizabethtown College

FYE Speaker at Collin College and Western Michigan University



Chris Hayes

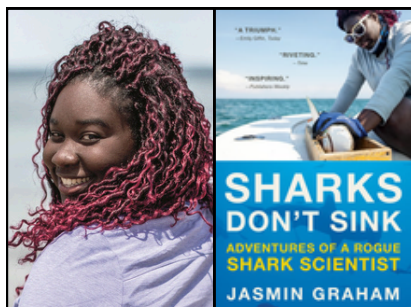
Journalist, MSNBC host, and *New York Times*-bestselling author

Theme: Technology & Public Health

"With dazzling knowledge and insight, Chris Hayes not only diagnoses our growing social alienation but provides a path to sanity. If you long for something that will hold your attention and even help restore it, then read this utterly compelling and enlightening book."
—David Grann, #1 *New York Times*-bestselling author of *The Wager* and *Killers of the Flower Moon*

"Brilliant book... Reading it has made me change the way I work and think." — Rachel Maddow

"A useful primer on how social media and the attention economy have warped our democracy and reshaped our lives." — Barack Obama



Jasmin Graham

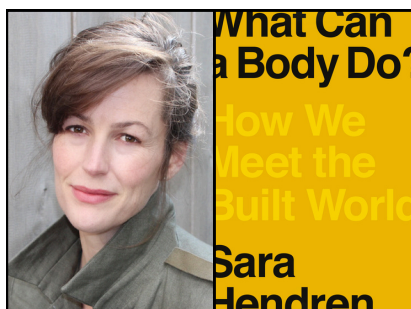
Shark scientist, environmental educator, and President/CEO of Minorities in Shark Sciences

Theme: Biodiversity; Social Justice; Black Voices & Stories

"She was absolutely outstanding. The students loved her. We had a great crowd last night, and they clearly told all their friends because we had another great crowd the next morning!"
— Boston University

"Jasmin's journey, along with her love of sharks, is both fascinating and inspiring, sitting at the cross-section of science and social justice. This book is a triumph." — *TODAY*

Speaker at Boston University and California State San Bernardino



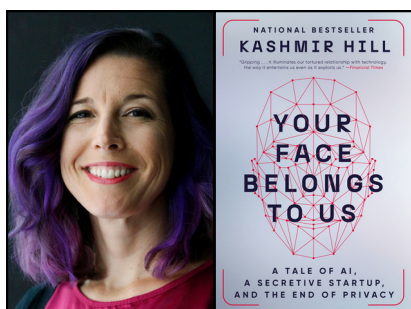
Sara Hendren

Design researcher and author of *What Can A Body Do?*

Theme: Design; Disability Justice

"Sara Hendren's visit enlightened thoughtful discussion and discourse between design, art, and disabilities studies. Sara carried the room so well and made connections with faculty, students, staff, and members of the local community. It truly was an elevated collaborative event with Sara's lead." — Chapman University

FYE Speaker at Stevens Institute of Technology



Kashmir Hill

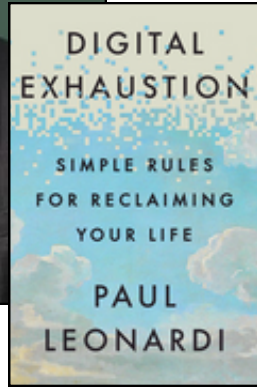
Technology journalist reporting on AI and privacy

Theme: Technology & AI

"Kashmir Hill all but invented the tech dystopia beat, and no one is a more exuberant and enjoyable guide to the dark corners of our possible future than she is. Reaching deep into the past to paint a terrifying portrait of our future, Hill's thorough, awe-inspiring reporting and compelling storytelling paint a fascinating tale of tech's next chapter. This is the most fun you can have reading a real-life nightmare."

— Garrett Graff, author of *The Only Plane in the Sky*

Speaker at Carlow University, Duke University, Salve Regina University, and University of Mississippi



Paul Leonardi

Social scientist and author of *Digital Exhaustion*

Theme: Life Skills

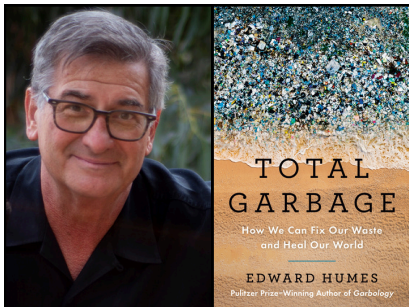
"In this wise and practical book, Paul Leonardi shares strategies for becoming smart managers of our digital lives. From paring down my apps to limiting the carpool texts, I came away with several new ideas for reclaiming my time and energy."

— Laura Vanderkam, author of *Tranquility by Tuesday* and *168 Hours*

"Paul Leonardi makes a compelling case that digital exhaustion is a scourge that we can no longer ignore. Fortunately, he also provides a practical game plan for pushing back. It's time to reclaim our lives!"

— Cal Newport, bestselling author of *Slow Productivity* and *Deep Work*

"An invitation to think more deeply about the ways in which we interact with our devices. . . . Helpful for managers, parents, and those thinking about how to manage their digital lives." — *Kirkus Reviews*



Edward Humes

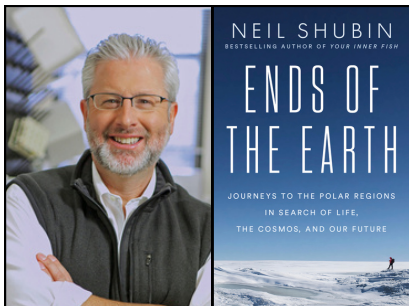
Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Garbology* and *Total Garbage*

Theme: Climate Change

"Humes' concern for our planet is both genuine and infectious, and the students came away inspired to examine their own trash-producing behaviors. [...] I believe his effect on my students will be long-lasting; they learned that we must not only be better stewards of our precious resources, but we must also spread the word, just as he is doing."

— California State University, Northridge

FYE Speaker at [Bellarmine University](#), [Columbus State University](#), [Georgia Institute of Technology](#), [Madisonville Community College](#), [Purdue University Northwest](#), [Rowan University](#), [University of New Mexico](#), [Washington State University](#), and more



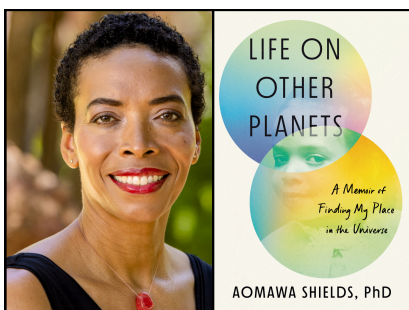
Neil Shubin

Evolutionary biologist, discoverer of the "Missing Link," and author of *Your Inner Fish*

Theme: The Natural World

"Neil was incredible. He did a phenomenal job of engaging with the audience and keeping them entertained. From 8th graders to professors, everyone has noted what a passionate and eloquent speaker he was." — Tennessee Tech University

FYE Speaker at [Syracuse University](#)



Aomawa Shields

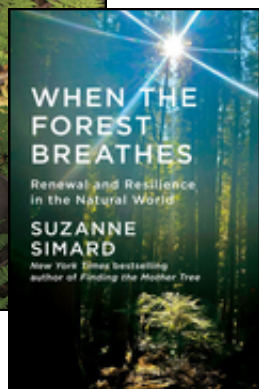
Astronomer, astrobiologist, and Professor of Physics and Astronomy

Theme: Women's Voices & Stories; Physical Sciences; Black Voices & Stories

"Shields' unusual and inspiring account will appeal to readers who feel stuck in life.

Discussing relatable issues like making decisions, financial worries, and imposter syndrome while she shares her approach to achieving lofty goals, Shields' words will reassure readers who question their abilities when success seems elusive." — *Booklist*

Speaker at [Princeton University](#)



Suzanne Simard

Leader of The Mother Tree Project and author of *Finding the Mother Tree* and *When the Forest Breathes*

Theme: Climate Change; Environment & Biodiversity

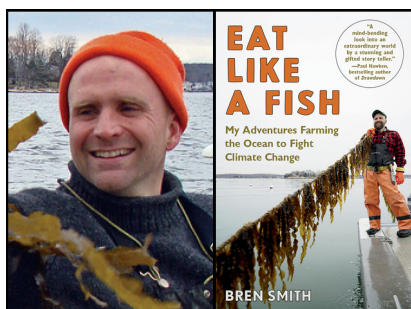
“Suzanne Simard did a wonderful job explaining some difficult science. The audience was spellbound, the Q&A was insightful, and she took ample time with each person who wanted to have a book signed.”

— Reston Community Center

“Suzanne was fantastic. [...] We were particularly pleased by the transdisciplinary audience that Suzanne attracted. We even had some community members and local teachers attend, which was great.”

— Pennsylvania State University

Speaker at Boston College; Concordia College; Emory University; Pennsylvania State University; University of California, Santa Barbara; University of Oregon; University of Missouri; West Chester University; Whitman College; and Willamette University



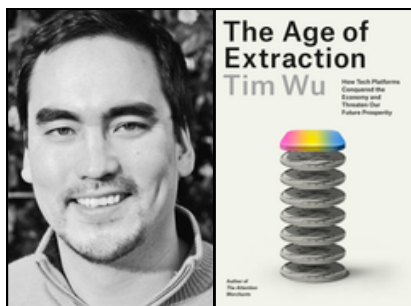
Bren Smith

Restorative ocean farmer, co-founder of GreenWave, and author of *Eat Like a Fish*

Theme: Climate Change & Food Sciences

“Bren had the room busting up with laughter on multiple occasions and those in attendance (students, faculty, alumni, community members) seemed to really connect to Bren’s authenticity and down-to-earth demeanor.”

— University of Alaska Southeast
FYE Speaker at University of Alaska Southeast



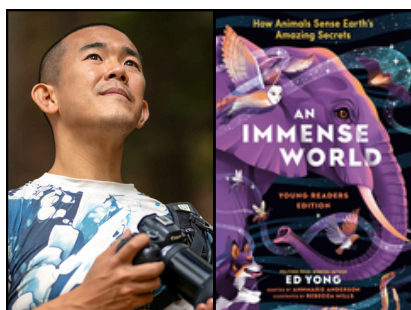
Tim Wu

Former White House Antitrust Advisor, Columbia Law School Professor, and author of *The Age of Extraction* and *The Attention Merchants*

Theme: Technology; Business

“Tim was well-received by all of his audiences. We’re a small university, and something we care about is intimacy in conversation. I think Tim thrived in this kind of environment; even the walks from one place to another were filled with impassioned conversation. And Tim has, obviously, a great mind and a great set of experiences. [He] seems to know interesting things about nearly any topic of conversation.”

— Stetson University
Speaker at Pratt Institute, Stetson University, and University of Wisconsin-Madison



Ed Yong

Pulitzer Prize-winner and author of *An Immense World*

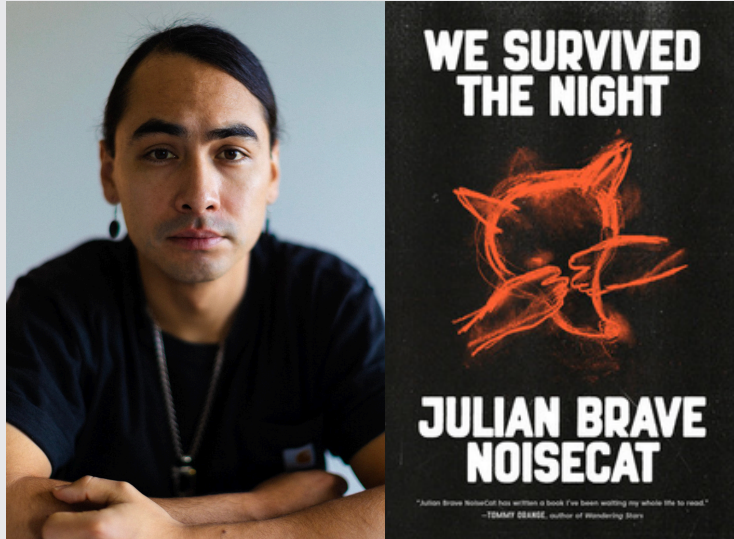
Theme: Environment & Biodiversity

“A dazzling ride through the sensory world of astoundingly sophisticated creatures . . . It’s Mr. Yong’s task to expand our thinking, to rouse our sense of wonder, to help us feel humbled and exalted at the capabilities of our fellow inhabitants on Earth. . . . [A] deeply affectionate travelogue of animal sensory wonders.”

— *The Wall Street Journal*
FYE Speaker at Stanford University

Speaker Event

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AUTHOR LUNCH

Monday, February 16th
12:15 pm — 1:45 pm
Elwha Ballroom A/B

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