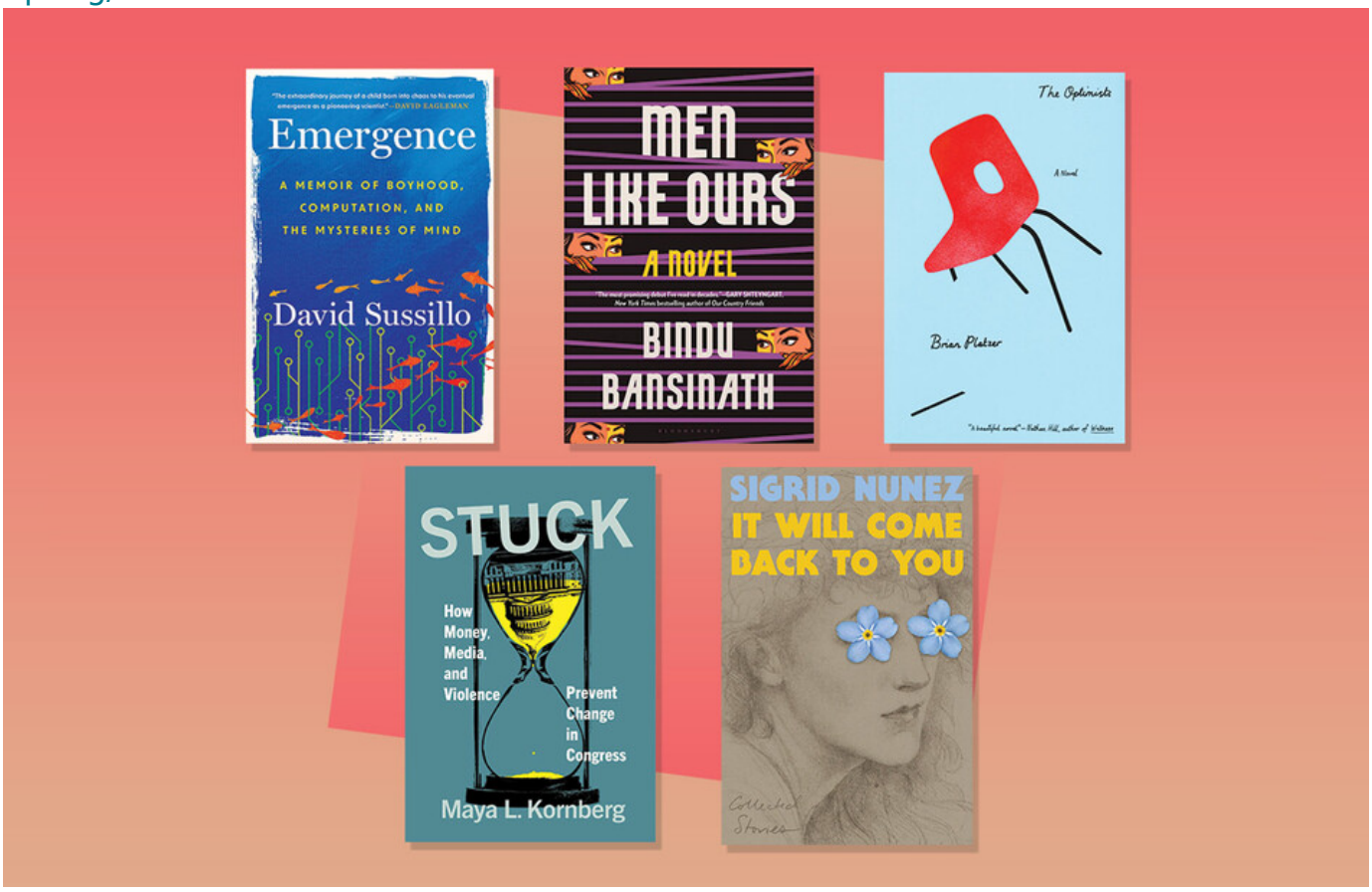
Books

5 New Books to Read this Spring

All by Columbia alumni authors.

By
Rebecca Shapiro
|
Spring/Summer 2026



Emergence

David Sussillo ’03SEAS, ’09GSAS

Born to mentally ill, drug-addicted parents, David Sussillo spent most of his trauma-filled childhood in group homes and foster care. Now, he's what his Stanford students call "science famous," a pioneering researcher who has helped shape - cutting-edge AI technology at companies like Google and Meta. In this moving memoir, he infuses his remarkable life story with neurological insight, using his scientific expertise to try to understand the forces that shaped him.

Men Like Ours

Bindu Bansinath '18CC, '23SOA

When Matthew Pillai is found dead in his car on a New Jersey highway, surrounded by pills, the gossip turns to where his GPS had pointed: Willow Road, and the women who live there. At the center is the Sharma family, recently widowed Anita and her teenage daughter, Leila, with whom Matthew had been suspiciously close. As the investigation heats up and secrets are uncovered, the core of this tight-knit South Asian enclave is rocked. Bindu Bansinath's debut novel is unique and sharply funny, a warmhearted portrait of a community.

The Optimists

Brian Platzer '04CC

The first time John Keating, an eighth-grade English teacher at a Manhattan private school, meets pupil Clara Hightower, he understands immediately "there'd never be another one." Years later, Clara is a tech titan turned activist, and Keating, immobilized by a stroke, reflects on his remarkable student and the role he played in her origin story. It's a fascinating take on the student-educator relationship, from someone who knows it well — by day, Platzer teaches at a school much like the one in his novel.

Stuck

Maya L. Kornberg ’16SIPA

There’s no doubt that the state of the US Congress is concerning. Plagued by extreme partisanship, with threats of violence on the rise, it is ineffective as a legislative body and often toxic. In her timely new book, Maya L. Kornberg, a fellow at NYU School of Law, focuses on three pivotal congressional freshman classes — the “Watergate babies” of 1974, the Contract with America conservatives of 1994, and the anti-Trumpers of 2018 — to understand how we got where we are, and what steps could move us forward.

It Will Come Back to You

Sigrid Nunez ’72BC, ’75SOA

The beloved author of nine novels — including the 2018 National Book Award winner, *The Friend* — Sigrid Nunez has not until now published a book of short fiction. Her new book culls thirteen stories from her decades-long career, showcasing the evolution of her voice. As with her novels, the stories are at once funny and profound, using everyday scenes to ask big questions about memory, grief, art, and love.

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Guide to school abbreviations

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