

Reading List: Winter 2017

New and noteworthy releases from alumni and faculty

Winter 2017-18



Jeffrey Saks

Wolf Season

by Helen Benedict

Columbia Journalism professor Helen Benedict is known for her compassionate examination of how women experience war; she is the author of seven novels and five works of non-fiction, many of which explore related themes. In her latest novel, Benedict writes about three women — an Iraq War veteran, a widowed Iraqi refugee, and a young mother with a husband deployed in Afghanistan — as they wait out a hurricane in upstate New York.

What Is It All But Luminous

by Art Garfunkel '65CC

The folk singer's first memoir reads more like a secret diary than an autobiography. Written largely in verse — in a font meant to mimic handwriting — and peppered with photographs, it chronicles Garfunkel's middle-class Jewish childhood in Queens, education at Columbia, rise to the top of the pop charts with Simon and Garfunkel, and finally the quiet and consistent joys of family life.

Five-Carat Soul

by James McBride '80JRN

James McBride is a writer who won't be pigeonholed — his wildly diverse and successful books include a sentimental family memoir (bestseller *The Color of Water*) and a picaresque historical novel (National Book Award winner *The Good Lord Bird*). There are some unifying features to his work, though: a focus on race, family, and larger-than-life characters. All are present in his latest, a vibrant story collection that introduces us to an antique-toy dealer, a boxer literally fighting for his soul, a group of poor kids forming a neighborhood band, and a mixed-race boy who thinks that his father is Abraham Lincoln.

Jewish Comedy: A Serious History

by Jeremy Dauber

Jewish history and comedy have been intertwined since biblical times, argues Jeremy Dauber, a Columbia professor of Yiddish language, literature, and culture. In his insightful, entertaining new book, he traces the evolution of Jewish humor from ancient Talmudic jokes to Borscht Belt routines to episodes of *Seinfeld* and *Broad City*.

The Future of Us

by Irwin Redlener

Few understand the challenges facing American children better than Irwin Redlener. As a pediatrician, he has worked with often forgotten populations, like poor children in the Arkansas Delta, child abuse victims in the inner city, and kids affected by 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. With Paul Simon, he founded the Children's Health Fund, an advocacy and public-health organization, and he also runs the Program on Child Well-Being and Resilience at Columbia's Earth Institute. In this memoir, he chronicles his storied career and makes a powerful argument that lack of access to adequate health care and education is not only harming society's most vulnerable members but undermining America's resilience and influence.

MRS.

by Caitlin Macy '96SOA

Like a modern Edith Wharton, novelist Caitlin Macy documents the habits of the well-heeled women of New York's Upper East Side. At the center of her juicy third novel is Philippa Lye, a woman with a questionable past who has married her way into the ultra-wealthy investment-banking set. Philippa refuses to participate in the gossip-fueled culture that rules the preschool drop-off hour, but it catches up with her anyway.

Suzanne's Children

by Anne Nelson

Few people know the story of Suzanne Spaak, a Belgian aristocrat and one of Paris's leading socialites, who became a hero of the French Resistance during World War II.

Together with her friend Mira Sokol, a Polish-Jewish refugee, Spaak helped “kidnap” hundreds of Jewish children, and kept them hidden during the German occupation of Paris. SIPA professor Anne Nelson’s riveting new biography — the first book to focus on Spaak — traces Spaak’s life from her Catholic upbringing to her eventual execution by the Gestapo.

Calder: The Conquest of Time

by Jed Perl '72CC

For nearly a century, museum-goers have been charmed by Alexander Calder’s bold mobiles and whimsical wire sculptures. But forty years after the beloved artist’s death, there has been no major biography of him. With his new book, which focuses on Calder’s early years, noted art critic Jed Perl changes that. He uses never-before-seen letters and papers, as well as over 350 illustrations, to demonstrate how Calder’s childhood and life abroad came to shape his illustrious career.



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