**Summer Reading 2011**

One of our primary goals at Urban is to encourage and support learning outside of the classroom. To this end, we expect that you will read during extended school breaks. Here are some suggested titles recommended by Urban faculty and staff. The books are available in bookstores and in local libraries. You should plan to read *at least* two of these books this summer, and we strongly encourage you to read the all-school book, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.

In the fall, we will have lunchtime discussions about the books we’ve read!

**All-School Read**

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot \*great for all grades\*

*Bioethics. Genetics. Cells. Civil rights. Poverty. Family. Journey.*

*This amazing book seeks to discover were ubiquitous HeLa cells come from. Part history, part detective story, and completely compelling. We will have an all-school meeting and other events in the fall surrounding this great book. Visit the library website(www.urbanschool.org/library) for more reviews!*

**Fiction**

The Bone People by Karen Hulme \*great for all grades\*

*This is quite a first novel. A silver-haired, mute, abused orphan, a laborer heavy with sustained loss, and a brilliant introspective recluse discover, after enormous struggle through injury and illness, what it means to lose and then regain a family. (From Library Journal)*

Courtney Rein, English

The Stone Gods by Jeanette Winterson

*The apocalypse is coming. You'll need something to read. "The Stone Gods," Jeanette Winterson's new novel, makes an excellent choice for desert-planet reading - scary, beautiful, witty and wistful by turns, dipping into the known past as it explores potential futures. (from The New York Times)*

Ken Garcia-Gonzalez, Dean of Multicultural Life

The Lathe of Heaven by Ursula K. LeGuin

*A man realizes that his dreams affect the past. Not just his past, but everyone's past. If he dreams it's been hot and dry, by the time he wakes up, hot and dry weather is the reality for everyone as far back as they can remember. He starts to see a psychiatrist to help him with this problem -- at which point everything gets increasingly complicated.*

Henri Picciotto, Math

Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro \*great for all grades\*

*Kathy, Tommy and Ruth were once classmates at Hailsham, a private school in the English countryside. The tightly knit trio experienced love, loss, and betrayal as they pondered their destinies... The novel is narrated by Kathy, now 31 and a "carer," who recalls how Hailsham students were "told and not told" about their precarious circumstances. In this luminous offering, Ishiguro nimbly navigates the landscape of emotion--the inevitable link between present and past and the fine line between compassion and cruelty, pleasure and pain. (from Booklist)*

Laura Veuve, Math Department Chair

Sometimes a Great Notion by Ken Kesey

*This novel has ties to the Haight (Can you pass the Test?) and to Oregon (yay!), written in a style that could only have been pulled off between 1960 and 1970. It's the Great American Novel, PLUS Streams of Consciousness, PLUS Logging! Also it's long.*

Riley Maddox, Math

The Passage by Justin Cronin

*This is still my favorite book of the last 12 months. Although a completely different human-created disaster than that in Japan right now, it's so relevant to the times.*

Kris Bailey, Director of Communications

The Help by Katherine Stockett \*great for all grades\*

*This novel is a beautifully complex and truthful glimpse into the lives of women in the American South at a transitional time in our history. It is courageous, thoughtful, and totally captivating. Amazing story!*

Kelli Yon, Photography

The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafón (La sombra del viento)

*To call this book old-fashioned is to mean it in the best way. It's big, chock-full of unusual characters, and strong in its sense of place. Part detective story, part boy's adventure, part romance, fantasy, and gothic horror, the intricate plot is urged on by extravagant foreshadowing and nail-nibbling tension. This is rich, lavish storytelling, (from Booklist)*

Esteban Speier, Spanish

**Non Fiction**

**Memoir**

Jesus Land by Julia Scheeres

*Themes include: Fundamentalist Calvinism, racism, adoption, cultural competency & the experience of an interracial family living in Indiana in the late 1970s-1980s. A page-turner! I read this one in 24-hour span.*

Tomas Jacquez, Spanish & Service learning

**Sports**

Season of Life by Jeffrey Marx \*great for all grades\*

*This follows the life of Joe Ehrmann, a football legend whose life is altered by a tragic event. An incredible read for teenage boys looking for insight into what it is to "be a man."*

Greg Angilly, Athletic Director

Willie Mays: The Life, the Legend by James S. Hirsch \*great for all grades\*

*This is a life and times biography where Willie Mays the baseball player, if not the person, emerges in all of his abundant talent. You will understand why he is widely regarded as the most complete baseball player ever. You will know why his statue graces the plaza in front of AT&T Park. If you claim to bleed orange and black and don't read this biography, you should be traded to the Dodgers!*

LeRoy Votto, History

**Video Games**

Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter by Tom Bissell \*great for all grades\*

*A quizzical, ambivalent and frequently hilarious look at the world of modern day interactive entertainment. Over the course of nine essays, author Tom Bissell (God Lives in St. Petersburg, The Father of All Things) dismantles and examines the good and the bad qualities of video games, why it is that he finds them so compelling, and what the future may hold for this still-immature artistic medium.*

Kirk Hamilton, Music

**Math/Logic/Philosophy**

\*great for all grades\*

# Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth by [Apostolos Doxiadis](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/32716.Apostolos_Doxiadis) and [Christos H. Papadimitriou](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/80147.Christos_H_Papadimitriou)

*This is a compelling graphic novel that follows the life and intellectual journey of logician and philosopher Bertrand Russell. While the story is woven with vivid illustrations and great storytelling, it also introduces and explores big ideas in math, logic and truth, and makes them (somewhat) easy to grasp.*

Sarah Levin, Librarian

**History**

Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies by Jared Diamond

*Most of this work deals with non-Europeans, but Diamond's thesis sheds light on why Western civilization became hegemonic: "History followed different courses for different peoples because of differences among peoples' environments, not because of biological differences among peoples themselves." Those who domesticated plants and animals early got a head start on developing writing, government, technology, weapons of war, and immunity to deadly germs. (From Library Journal)*

Jonathan Howland, English & Dean of Faculty

**Science**

The Disappearing Spoon and Other True Tales of Madness, Love, and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of the Elementsby Sam Kean

*Unlike many popular chemistry books, this one is both well written and engaging (according to me and several students). The author describes the historical and scientific stories behind all the elements on the periodic table, clumping them together into groups that have similar properties or uses. Though most of this book will be accessible to everyone, some sections will make more sense if you've taken 9th grade science.*

Geoff Ruth, Science Department Chair

**Art**

Seeing Is Forgetting The Name of The Thing One Sees by Lawrence Weschler

*This book consists of conversations between painter/installationist Robert Irwin and his biographer Lawrence Weschler. The conversations track Irwin's process of allowing curiosity to be his primary motivation for art-making instead of ambition, and the subsequent dramas that play out in the art world because of this. It's thrilling and fascinating and validating to any artist's process.*

Sarah Fontaine, Outdoor Trips