

# Looking for books to read this summer? Our professors have you covered

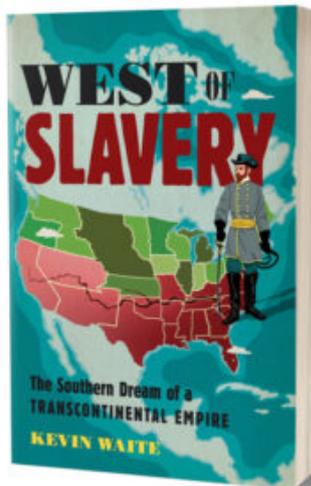


**GPS professors share the books they can't put down, on topics ranging from reparations to Mao-era China**

By Virginia Watson | GPS News

Days are getting longer, and the academic year is drawing to a close. As summer approaches, many of us will gain some precious time back to put toward reading for pleasure.

Our professors shared the books they're currently reading, giving insight into their wide range of academic and literary interests.

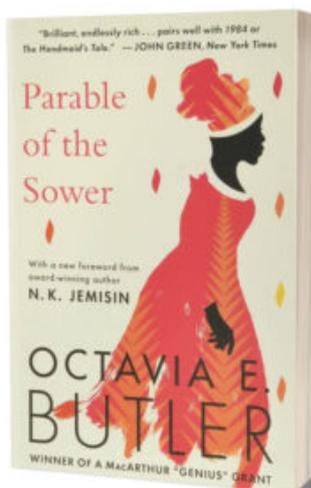


## **Professor Samuel Bazzi**

I'm reading "[West of Slavery: The Southern Dream of a Transcontinental Empire](#)" by historian Kevin Waite. The book provides an entirely novel historical take on how the former Confederacy and the legacy of slavery influenced political and economic life in the western U.S., with a fascinating look at California in particular. This work has informed some new research of mine aimed at understanding how migration after the Civil War shaped the institutional and cultural foundations of racial inequity across America.

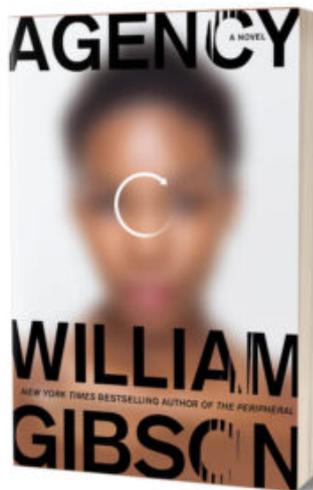


I'm also reading "[From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century](#)" by William A. Darity Jr. and A. Kirsten Mullen. I am reading this book to learn more about the case for reparations from the preeminent scholars on the subject. The authors lay out a set of very compelling arguments that should move the needle on this important part of the debate around racial justice.



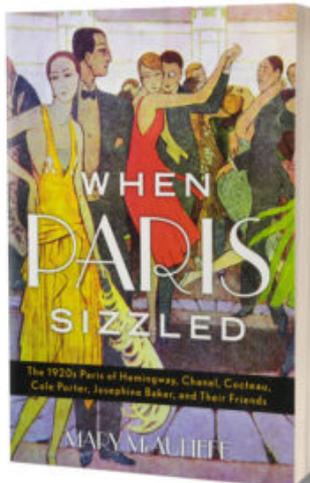
## **Professor Stephan Haggard**

I read too much non-fiction, so I was pleased when my colleague [John Ahlquist](#) pulled me out of my shell and lent me a copy of Octavia Butler's "[Parable of the Sower](#)." I am still only halfway through it, but a future California is a dystopian nightmare in which a sharp teenager has to figure out how to survive, and literally. Some kind of belief - faith - plays a role. Good dystopias are just bad enough to be imaginable - and this one is just that.



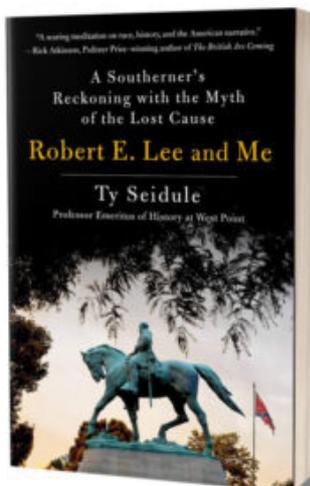
## [Professor Uma Karmarkar](#)

I'm reading William Gibson's "[Agency](#)." Among other things, it pops in and out of an alternate timeline where the 2016 U.S. election went a different way. Gibson has an astonishing handle on the liminal space between the technology and science of what is possible now and will be possible tomorrow. His fiction (and nonfiction) is engaging, exciting and ultimately profoundly cool.

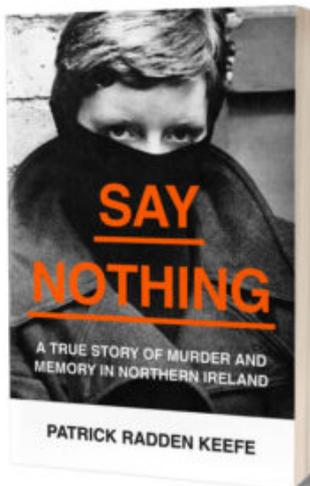


## [Professor Emeritus Ellis Krauss](#)

I'm reading "[When Paris Sizzled: The 1920s Paris of Hemingway, Chanel, Cocteau, Cole Porter, Josephine Baker, and Their Friends](#)" by Mary McAuliffe. The book describes the lives of the incredible cast of characters living in and creating in the golden age of Paris in the 20th century, from WWI to the 1930s, and how the "war to end all wars" (not!) influenced a generation of artists, composers, authors, performers and celebrities - many of them expat Americans - to live it up and become even more creative in the most exciting city in the world at the time. As we emerge from this pandemic with many of us having a bad case of "wanderlust," it is a great escape into a similar period in the past, with some of the most formative influencers of the 20th century!

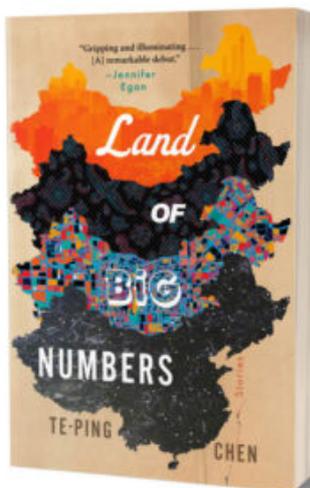


And I also just started reading "[Robert E. Lee and Me: A Southerner's Reckoning with the Myth of the Lost Cause](#)" by Ty Seidule. The author, a retired colonel in the army and former chair of the history department at West Point, describes how he grew up in the South and through his young adulthood believed in the "lost cause" myth of the Confederacy and worshipped Robert E. Lee. In adulthood he learned what a crock it all was - a false, manufactured myth. Because I was born in the South (but raised in New York City) and was a history buff from a young age, I could identify because I, too, swallowed the myth and learned the truth in adulthood. In this age of racial reckoning, we all need to understand how we have gotten to the place we are today because of these fallacious stories we were inculcated with in earlier periods.



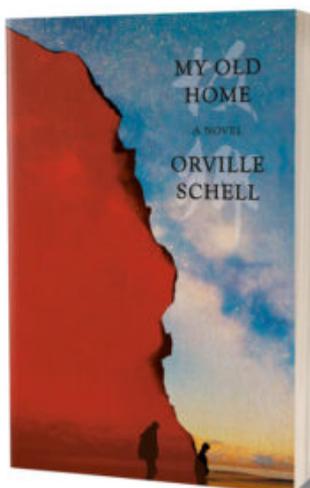
## [Professor Gordon McCord](#)

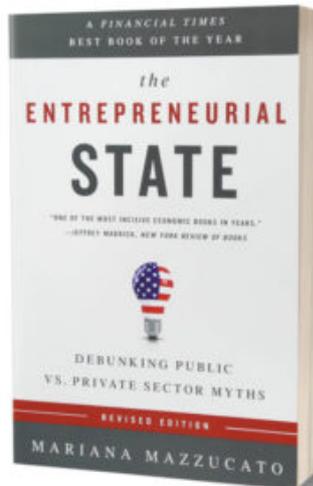
I'm very much enjoying "[Say Nothing](#)" by Patrick Radden Keefe. It is an engaging account of the Troubles in Northern Ireland but reads as a novel. Quantitative social science often asks narrow questions and puts forward falsifiable hypotheses, so I always try to read history to get a more textured understanding of the context I'm studying. "Say Nothing" is an example of how effective a historically accurate novel can be in communicating the complexity and nuance of a historical event.



## [Professor Susan Shirk](#)

I'm reading two works of fiction that illuminate life in China during the Mao era and today: Wall Street Journal reporter Chen Te-Ping's short story collection, "[Land of Big Numbers](#)," and China expert Orville Schell's novel, "[My Old Home: A Novel of Exile](#)."





## [Professor David Victor](#)

I'm reading Mariana Mazzucato's "[The Entrepreneurial State](#)." The era of big government is back in America, or so it seems. With the state taking on all sorts of missions with gusto, from fixing inequality to stopping global warming, it's worth asking: is government up to the task?

Mazzucato offers an emphatic yes. It helps to have a foreigner (the author is Italian) look at the country with fresh eyes, retelling iconic stories in private sector folklore (e.g., the rise of Apple) in a voice that emphasizes how government took many of the key risks. A bigger state must be a smarter state, and Mazzucato argues that the neurons of skilled government are already firing.