Your next great summer read

GPS professors share the books on their summer reading list, from retellings of Greek myths to explorations of the post-Cold War stalemate between the U.S. and Russia

The spring quarter is coming to a close, and many have their eyes toward summer – and extra reading time outside of classroom texts. Professors at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) shared what’s on their reading list for the summer months, covering a variety of genres.

See their picks below:

**Eli Berman**

I'll be reading *The Uncertainty Principle* by Joel Wachman. It’s an intimate book by one of the bravest, funniest and most talented stylists I know, about a couple’s struggles with infertility and conception.
Jennifer Burney

“Cloud Cuckoo Land” by Anthony Doerr. It’s hard to say much about it without giving important spoilers away, but it’s just a sweeping, amazing book that interweaves stories from the past, present and future. Hovering over these plotlines – I promise I am giving nothing away here – is this sense that Doerr wanted to write a love letter to libraries and librarians that feels really important in a time of misinformation.

“Long Division” by Kiese Laymon. This is another set of interwoven stories (I may or may not have a type here!) about a mystery, racism and time travel in Mississippi. In short, it’s a really entertaining, multi-dimensional and wonderfully written book.

“(Re)Born in the USA: An Englishman’s Love Letter to His Chosen Home” by Roger Bennett. I love football – the beautiful game, not the one with helmets and touchdowns – and Roger Bennett is a beloved commentator and superfan. His story of growing up in a working class Jewish family in Liverpool and moving to the U.S. is a delightful read for any international footie fan.

Tai Ming Cheung

I’m reading “Quest for Kim: In Search of Kipling’s Great Game” by Peter Hopkirk. Hopkirk is one of my favorite writers who delves into the dramatic and colorful history of great power rivalries in and around Central Asia during the 19th and early 20th centuries with riveting narratives. If only academic writing on contemporary great power competition could be as engrossing.
Stephan Haggard
I’m reading “Not One Inch: America, Russia, And the Making of the Post-Cold War Stalemate” by M.A. Sarotte. I can’t stop gawking at the train wreck in Ukraine. How did we get here? Did NATO expansion have anything to do with it? Sarotte is a terrific historian and walks through the early decision-making around NATO expansion, including not only Clinton but the two Bushes as well. She puts more weight on U.S. missteps than I would and underestimates the extent to which successful democratic projects constitute the real threat to the Kremlin. But the storytelling is nuanced and lays out the fact pattern we need to debate.

Kyle Handley
“Schism: China, America, and the Fracturing of the Global Trading System” by Paul Blustein. So far this has been a great narrative of economic and political relations between the U.S. and China covering negotiations for China’s World Trade Organization (WTO) accession through the present day. “The Topeka School” by Ben Lerner. This is a fictional account of the life of a high school debater in Topeka, Kansas, that parallels many events in the present. It is written by an author that I competed against while I was in high school in the late 1990s.
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<th><strong>Gaurav Khanna</strong></th>
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<td><em>“Circe”</em> by Madeline Miller. It’s an interesting retelling of Greek myths from the witch’s point of view in the Iliad, rather than the traditional male hero, Odysseus. This subversion of traditional storytelling makes you look at narratives in a different light.</td>
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<td><em>“Seven Brief Lessons on Physics”</em> by Carlo Rovelli is a fascinating, easy-to-read book on very complex ideas in physics. It’s been a while since I learned so many new things while enjoying every bit of it.</td>
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<th><strong>Nico Ravanilla</strong></th>
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<td>I’m currently enjoying <em>“The Way to Love: The Last Meditations of Anthony de Mello.”</em> It’s really short and more of a booklet. It’s a series of meditations that are profoundly insightful yet surprisingly refreshing in their simplicity.</td>
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I’m reading *The Chancellor: The Remarkable Odyssey of Angela Merkel* by Kati Marton. Marton’s 2021 biography of Angela Merkel is short, thoughtful and well-written. Marton, who grew up behind the iron curtain in Hungary, loves her subject – and for good reason. Merkel was the most reliable Western leader and the voice of the west when other countries (notably the U.S.) were a lot flakier politically. She chronicles Merkel’s unlikely rise in a sea of German men and shows how hard work (and staying quiet while others twist themselves in knots, politically) put her into the German Chancellery. Adoration comes with flaws and blind spots, to be sure, and Merkel’s tin ear around the rise of nationalist populism still haunts Germany, a problem hardly unique to that nation. But no account of the modern West is complete without a picture of Merkel.