FALL 2017 VOLTAIRE'S COFFEES
BOOK BLURBS + PROFESSOR BIOS

**Dates marked with an asterisk are subject to change**

All coffees will be held at 7 PM. P2SA will coordinate transportation.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes*, hosted by Professor Michael Starbird

**Date:** Thursday, August 31

**Location:** The Starbird Residence

Sherlock Holmes is the most famous detective in fiction, and the legacy of Sherlock Holmes appears in innumerable TV detective shows and movies to this day. The 56 short stories and four novels present us with a wealth of delight as we follow Holmes’ amazing deductions. Some moments in the stories are truly classics such as the exchange in 'Silver Blaze':

*Inspector Gregory:* "Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

*Holmes:* "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

*Gregory:* "The dog did nothing in the night-time."

"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes

(Please read as many of the stories as you would wish)

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Michael Starbird is a University Distinguished Teaching Professor of Mathematics. He has received more than a dozen teaching awards, including Plan II’s Chad Oliver Teaching Award. His books include (with coauthor Edward Burger) the innovative textbook written for the Plan II mathematics class: The Heart of Mathematics: An Invitation to Effective Thinking and his first non-mathematical book, also with Burger, The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, hosted by Professor Carol MacKay

**Date:** Thursday, August 31

**Location:** On campus

Derived from two lectures that Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) delivered to a women's college at Cambridge, A Room of One's Own (1929) has become a major feminist manifesto in the tradition of Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) and Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (1949). Its original book jacket description by Hogarth Press--undoubtedly written by Woolf herself--announces, "This essay, which is largely fictitious, is based upon the visit of an outsider to a university and expresses the thoughts suggested by a comparison between the different standards of luxury at a man's college and at a woman's.” She goes on to trace the conditions for women writing in the past, ultimately trying "to forecast what effect comparative freedom and independence will have upon women’s artistic work in the future." One of the essay's key sentences reads as follows: "We think back through our mothers if we are women."
With graduate degrees from Stanford University and UCLA, Professor Carol MacKay specializes in Victorian fiction, Women's and Gender Studies, and autobiography. She is the author of Soliloquy in Nineteenth Century Fiction (1987) and Creative Negativity: Four Victorian Exemplars of the Female Quest (2001), as well as editor of The Two Thackerays (1988) and Dramatic Dickens (1989), which grew out of her international conference here at UT on Dickens and the theatre. The winner of several teaching awards, most notably the AMOCO Outstanding New Teacher Award and the Regents' Award for Teaching Excellence, Professor MacKay has been a member of the Distinguished Teaching Academy since 2003. She was appointed to the J.R. Millikan Centennial Professorship in English Literature in 2014. Her most recent book publication is a critical edition of Annie Besant’s 1885 Autobiographical Sketches. She confesses to being an ailurophile, and she is a daily swimmer in Barton Springs May through October—that is, when Barton Creek isn’t dealing with flood conditions.

Robert J. Gordon's The Rise and Fall of American Growth, hosted by Professor Austin Gleeson

Date: Sunday, September 3*

Location: The Gleeson Residence

In the century following the Civil War, an economic revolution improved the American standard of living in unbelievable ways. Things that we could not imagine our lives without now such as electric lighting, indoor plumbing, motor vehicles, air travel, and television came about and changed people’s lives. In The Rise and Fall of American Growth, Gordon introduces the idea that this era of unprecedented growth may come to an end by weaving together anecdotes and analysis. In his captivating narrative, he illustrates that there cannot be another era of life-altering innovations and contends that the United States’ growth will be hindered by things like the rising inequality, education quality, an aging population, and the rising debt of college students and the federal government. A much-needed critical voice in one of the most important debates of our time, The Rise and Fall of American Growth is both a tribute to a century of radical change and a warning of harder times to come.

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Gleeson received a B.S. in Physics from Drexel Institute of Technology in 1960, an M.S. in Physics from the University of Pennsylvania in 1963 and a Ph.D. in Physics from University of Pennsylvania in 1965. He has been teaching at the university since 1969. Of his teaching, one student said, "Dr. Gleeson loves what he teaches, he loves his students, and he inspires his students to take something away from his class." Of his own teaching philosophy, Gleeson says, "Successful learning requires student engagement with the material. I strive to achieve this everyday in my classes." Gleeson teaches Plan II Physics.
Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*, hosted by Professor Alexandra Wettlaufer

**Date:** Wednesday, September 6  
**Location:** The Wettlaufer Residence

Wise, funny, and heartbreaking, *Persepolis* is Marjane Satrapi’s memoir of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. In powerful black-and-white comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah’s regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq. The intelligent and outspoken only child of committed Marxists and the great-granddaughter of one of Iran’s last emperors, Marjane bears witness to a childhood uniquely entwined with the history of her country.

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Alexandra K. Wettlaufer is a Professor of French and Comparative Literature and the Associate Director of Plan II. Her work focuses on the relationship between literature and visual arts and she has published three books on the topic. In 2015, she received a Guggenheim Fellowship for her new project on the female authors George Sand and George Eliot and the rise of the novel in France and Britain. She is the new director of the Plan II program!

Italo Calvino’s *The Complete Cosmicomics*, hosted by Professor Brian Doherty

**Date:** Friday, September 8  
**Location:** The Doherty Residence

Italo Calvino’s Post World War II European fiction is playful and imaginative, and opened the door for the best aspects of what we now call postmodern. In Cosmicomics, he imagines epochal moments in cosmic history (the creation of the earth’s atmosphere, the Big Bang, the extinction of the dinosaurs, evolution from water to land) in very human terms, using as his mouthpiece a creature called Qfwfq. Q, as Doherty understandably likes to call him, exists across eons, most of the time doing what many in our own time do—looking for love (with limited success). These stories should be a must read for scientists, astronauts, physicists, chefs, school crossing-guards, and other humans.

* Those who choose *The Complete Cosmicomics* are required to read, but are not limited to reading, the following short stories: “The Distance of the Moon,” “A Sign in Space,” “All at One Point,” “The Aquatic Uncle,” “How Much Shall We Bet,” “The Dinosaurs,” and “The Spiral”

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Brian Doherty is a senior lecturer in the English Department. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1994. Courses taught in Masterworks of World Literature have led to an interest in the newly developing canon of global world literature. Dr. Doherty teaches world literature in the Plan II Honors Program as well as a course on the short story “Kafka and his Descendants,” in which Calvino figures prominently, which reflects his fascination with off-beat and whimsical. He has an essay in progress on "Three Presentations of Achebe’s Things Fall Apart’ which looks at the novel in context of three different anthologies.
Anthony Doerr’s Memory Wall, hosted by Professor Matt Valentine
Date: Tuesday, August 29*
Location: On campus

Anthony Doerr’s novel All the Light We Cannot See won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, but he had already established a reputation as a master of the short story. The stories in Memory Wall are set in South Africa, the United States, Lithuania, Germany and China, in the past, present and future. Each story concerns memory—some characters are haunted by painful memories while others try desperately to retain the memory of a life slipping away. Some of these stories could be called science fiction and some have elements of the supernatural, but they transcend the formulaic conventions of genre fiction. Doerr’s writing emphasizes the ephemeral nature of experience, and the beauty of every present moment.

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Matt Valentine teaches a Plan II Junior Seminar on Narrative Writing, and supervises the visiting writers series in the Joynes Reading Room at UT Austin. He holds an MFA in Creative Writing from New York University, and has won several awards for fiction. His nonfiction essays have been published recently in The Atlantic, Salon and Politico Magazine. Also a professional photographer, Matt’s photos have been published in the New York Times, Washington Post, Outside, Boston Review and elsewhere.

Jon Krakauer’s Missoula: Rape and Justice in a College Town, hosted by Professor Richard Reddick
Date: Tuesday, September 5*
Location: On campus

Missoula, Montana, is a typical college town, home to a highly regarded state university whose beloved football team inspires a passionately loyal fan base. Between January 2008 and May 2012, hundreds of students reported sexual assaults to the local police. Few of the cases were properly handled by either the university or local authorities. In this, Missoula is also typical. In these pages, acclaimed journalist Jon Krakauer investigates a spate of campus rapes that occurred in Missoula over a four-year period. Taking the town as a case study for a crime that is sadly prevalent throughout the nation, Krakauer documents the experiences of five victims: their fear and self-doubt in the aftermath; the skepticism directed at them by police, prosecutors, and the public; their bravery in pushing forward and what it cost them. These stories cut through abstract ideological debate about acquaintance rape to demonstrate that it does not happen because women are sending mixed signals or seeking attention. They are victims of a terrible crime, deserving of fairness from our justice system. Rigorously researched, rendered in incisive prose, Missoula stands as an essential call to action.

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Dr. Richard J. Reddick (BA, Plan II, 1995) is an award-winning associate professor in Educational
Administration, with courtesy appointments in the Department of African and African Diaspora Studies, and the Warfield Center of African and African American Studies. Dr. Reddick is also a fellow with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement and the Institute for Urban Policy Research and Analysis. He additionally serves as the Assistant Director of the Plan II Honors Program. Reddick's research, which focuses on areas including the experiences of Black faculty at predominantly white institutions, has been published in the American Educational Research Journal and the Harvard Educational Review, featured on NPR and the Associated Press. Dr. Reddick holds a master's and doctorate in higher education from Harvard University, and a bachelor's from The University of Texas at Austin. He is married and the father of two children, serves on the boards of two public charter schools, and is actively engaged in organizations focused on improving the quality of life for Black citizens of Austin, Texas.

**William Shakespeare's Macbeth, hosted by Professor Wayne Rebhorn**

**Date:** Monday, August 28  
**Location:** On campus

Macbeth (full title The Tragedy of Macbeth) is one of the many tragedies written by William Shakespeare, considered by many to be his darkest and most powerful work. Set in Scotland, the play illustrates the damaging physical and psychological effects of political ambition on those who seek power for its own sake. The play is believed to have been written between 1599 and 1606, and is most commonly dated 1606. The earliest account of a performance of what was probably Shakespeare's play is the Summer of 1606, when Simon Forman recorded seeing such a play at the Globe Theatre. It was first published in the Folio of 1623, possibly from a prompt book. It was most likely written during the reign of James I, who had been James VI of Scotland before he succeeded to the English throne in 1603. James was a patron of Shakespeare's acting company, and of all the plays Shakespeare wrote during James's reign, Macbeth most clearly reflects the playwright's relationship with the sovereign.

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Wayne Rebhorn's scholarship explores the social and political dimensions of literature and rhetoric in the European Renaissance. Working in three fields—the literatures of the English Renaissance and of the European Renaissance as well as Renaissance rhetoric—he has written, translated, edited, or co-edited eight books in addition to over twenty-five scholarly articles on authors from Boccaccio through More, Rabelais, DuBellay, and Shakespeare down to Milton. He has won numerous awards and prizes, including the Moern Language Association's Marraro Prize for the best book on Italian literature in 1990 for his Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli's Confidence Men, and he has been invited to lecture at major universities throughout the United States as well as in France, Italy, and Germany. Rebhorn received the Plan II Chad Oliver teaching award this past year.
Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, hosted by Professor Lisa Moore

**Date:** Tuesday, September 12  
**Location:** The Moore Residence

*Fun Home* is Alison Bechdel’s break out graphic novel, a darkly funny dysfunctional family tale, illustrated with Bechdel’s own drawings. Bechdel, who is also the creator of the Bechdel test to measure the amount of female presence in a film, penned *Fun Home* as a non-linear story exploring the trails and tribulations of her unconventional family life. The book explores her complicated relationship with her father, while revealing his own struggles with his identity. As Bechdel develops a gripping narrative through revealing more about her family and the “fun home” that they own.

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Lisa Moore is Archibald A. Hill Professor of English and Women’s and Gender Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. She's the author or editor of five books, including *Sister Arts: The Erotics of Lesbian Landscapes*, which won the Lambda Literary Award. She has been teaching British and world literature, poetry and poetics, and feminist and queer studies at UT Austin since 1991, where she’s received nine teaching awards. She loves teaching Plan II World Literature.

Ellen Forney's *Marbles*, hosted by Professor Steve Sonnenberg

**Date:** Tuesday, August 29  
**Location:** The Sonnenberg Residence

Shortly before her thirtieth birthday, cartoonist Ellen Forney was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Flagrantly manic and terrified that medications would cause her to lose creativity and her livelihood, she began a years-long struggle to find mental stability while retaining her passion and creativity. Searching to make sense of the popular concept of the crazy artist, she finds inspiration from the lives and work of other artists and writers who suffered from mood disorders, including Vincent van Gogh, Georgia O’Keeffe, William Styron, and Sylvia Plath. Darkly funny, intensely personal, and visually dynamic, Forney's graphic memoir provides a visceral glimpse into the effects of a mood disorder on the artist’s work. Her story seeks the answer to this question: if there’s a correlation between creativity and mood disorders, is an artist’s bipolar disorder a curse, or a gift?

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Dr. Stephen Sonnenberg is a physician, with a specialty in psychiatry. He is also a medical humanities scholar. He teaches in Plan II, the School of Law, the School of Architecture, the School of Undergraduate Studies, the Human Dimensions of Organizations Program in the College of Liberal Arts. Dr. Sonnenberg co-teaches a TC, "Myths of War and Violence," with Prof. Tom Palaima, and in the spring of 2017 he will teach a new TC, "The Doctor, The Patient, The Society, The Culture." He has supervised (as supervisor or reader) nineteen Plan II theses. Everything he teaches reflects his special interest in medical humanities. He is also Faculty Advisor to the Plan II Premedical Society.
Ben Lorner’s *Leaving the Atocha Station*, hosted by Professor J. K. Barret

**Date:** Wednesday, September 6  
**Location:** On campus

Adam Gordon is a brilliant, if highly unreliable, young American poet on a prestigious fellowship in Madrid, struggling to establish his sense of self and his relationship to art. What is actual when our experiences are mediated by language, technology, medication, and the arts? Is poetry an essential art form, or merely a screen for the reader’s projections? Instead of following the dictates of his fellowship, Adam’s “research” becomes a meditation on the possibility of the genuine in the arts and beyond: are his relationships with the people he meets in Spain as fraudulent as he fears his poems are? A witness to the 2004 Madrid train bombings and their aftermath, does he participate in historic events or merely watch them pass him by?

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J.K. Barret works on Renaissance literature. She holds a doctorate in English from Princeton University, and a BA from the University of Pennsylvania where she majored in English and minored in Classical Studies. She has been awarded several national fellowships (including the Huntington Library NEH long-term Fellowship, the Solmsen Fellowship, the Josephine de Kármán Fellowship and the Mrs. Giles Whiting Fellowship) that have provided support for book-length research projects. Her first book, Untold Futures: Time and Literary Culture in Renaissance England (Cornell University Press, 2016) treats conceptions of time and the future in the literature of Renaissance England. She has also received fellowship support to study French and Italian abroad. Her academic areas of interest include the intersection between word and image, temporality, performance, narrative, translation, and the influence of antiquity on Renaissance writers. She is an avid traveler, and has lived in Spain and visited Europe, Latin America and (briefly) Morocco.

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**Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass* and *Alice in Wonderland* as “Guides to College,” hosted by Professor Jerome Bump**

**Date:** Tuesday, September 5  
**Location:** On campus

In 1862 Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, a shy Oxford mathematician with a stammer, created a story about a little girl tumbling down a rabbit hole. Thus began the immortal adventures of Alice, perhaps the most popular heroine in English literature. Countless scholars have tried to define the charm of the Alice books—with those wonderfully eccentric characters the Queen of Hearts, Tweedledum, and Tweedledee, the Cheshire Cat, Mock Turtle, the Mad Hatter et al.—by proclaiming that they really comprise a satire on language, a political allegory, a parody of Victorian children’s literature, even a reflection of contemporary ecclesiastical history. Perhaps, as Dodgson might have said, Alice is no more than a dream, a fairy tale about the trials and tribulations of growing up—or down, or all turned round—as seen through the expert eyes of a child.

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Jerome and Sue Bump live near Lago Vista, a mile from Lake Travis, on a little “ranch” named “Pied
Beauty,” the title of a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Jerome has been a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow, and the recipient of the Jeanne Holloway Award for undergraduate teaching. He is the author of Gerard Manley Hopkins and sixty chapters and articles. He teaches Plan II World Literature.

Lynn Notage's *Ruined*, hosted by Professor Paul Woodruff

Date: Wednesday, August 30

Location: The Woodruff Residence

Where can you find safety, or love, in a nation torn by civil war? You might look into life in a brothel, as Lynn Nottage does in this brilliant Pulitzer-Prize winning play, produced in 2007. The play is based on interviews the author and director conducted in Africa. The New York Times review said of this play: “Ms. Nottage has endowed [her characters] with a strength that transforms this tale of ruin into a clear-eyed celebration of endurance.” The play is raw and beautiful, a tribute to the human spirit.

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Paul Woodruff is a professor of philosophy and classics at the University of Texas at Austin. He has published on ethics and theater, modern as well as ancient. His recent books include The Necessity of Theater: the Art of Watching and Being Watched (2008). He has self-published the plays he wrote during and soon after his experience of the war in Vietnam. A former director of Plan II, he has taught Plan II philosophy for many years, as well as an occasional TC or world literature course.

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Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, hosted by Professor George Christian

Date: Friday, September 1

Location; The Christian Residence

The Nobel Prize-winning author now gives us a learned, stylish, and immensely persuasive work of literary criticism that promises to change the way we read American literature even as it opens a new chapter in the American dialogue on race. Toni Morrison's brilliant discussions of the "Africanist" presence in the fiction of Poe, Melville, Cather, and Hemingway leads to a dramatic reappraisal of the essential characteristics of our literary tradition. She shows how much the themes of freedom and individualism, manhood and innocence, depended on the existence of a black population that was manifestly unfree--and that came to serve white authors as embodiments of their own fears and desires. Written with the artistic vision that has earned Toni Morrison a pre-eminent place in modern letters, *Playing in the Dark* will be avidly read by Morrison admirers as well as by students, critics, and scholars of American literature.

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George Scott Christian is a political consultant and lawyer. He has a solo practice in Austin. He also teaches English at the University of Texas at Austin. A native of Austin, Christian holds undergraduate (1982), masters (1997), doctoral (English, 2000; History, 2014), and law degrees
(1984) from the University of Texas. He was legislative aide to State Senator Ray Farabee of Wichita Falls from 1983 to 1985 and has practiced law in New York and Texas. Christian joined George Christian, Inc. in 1990 after four years with the Austin office of Hughes & Luce and served as its President until 2002. His clients include the Texas Association of Defense Counsel, Texas Taxpayers and Research Association, American Forest & Paper Association, and National Association of Publicly Traded Partnerships.

Jennifer B. Lee’s *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Date*, hosted by Professor Chui-Mi Lai

**Date:** Monday, September 4  
**Location:** The Lai Residence

“(New York Times writer) Jennifer B. Lee’s chief mission was to solve the mystery of how dozens of people across America had won a lottery after receiving the lucky numbers in their fortune cookies. But her journey, which took her into the world of Chinese restaurants, provoked even greater investigations. Traveling across the globe and to almost every American state, Lee interviewed legendary restaurateurs, searched for the connection between General Tso and the chicken dish bearing his name, delved into the origins of chop suey as well as the fortune cookie...For anyone who has ever found wisdom in a fortune cookie, her book offers a delicious feast of surprises and wonder.” [Quoted from the Publisher]

[Note from Dr. Lai: Please focus on Chapter 5, “The Long March of General Tso.” Lee’s search for the origins of General Tso’s Chicken was made into a documentary, released March 2015.]

*Chapter 5 is available upon request on PDF form

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Dr. Chiu-Mi Lai is Senior Lecturer in Chinese Literature in Asian Studies at the University of Texas in Austin, where she teaches courses on Chinese literature and culture and linguistics. Dr. Lai received her Ph.D., with honors, in early medieval Chinese literature at the University of Washington and has spent time in China (Nanjing University) and Taiwan (her place of birth), including dissertation research at National Taiwan University. At Rice University, she became involved in educational outreach work with the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and the Houston Museum of Natural Science, and continues to be active in the greater UT community. She loves dogs, science fiction and fantasy, and sports. For Plan II, Dr. Lai co-teaches TC 302 Landscapes Tales in Art, Literature and Geology with a geologist, Dr. David Mohrig.