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

Date: 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 co-author 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: Sunday, August 28
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."

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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.

Carlo Rovelli’s Seven Brief Lessons on Physics (Riverhead Books Publishing; Tra edition; March 1, 2016), hosted by Professor Austin Gleeson

Date: Location:
Seven Brief Lessons on Physics is a book about the joy of discovery. Carlo Rovelli brings a playful, entertaining, and mind-bending introduction to modern physics, offering surprising—and surprisingly easy to grasp—explanations of Einstein's general relativity, quantum mechanics, elementary particles, gravity, black holes, the complex architecture of the universe, and the role humans play in this weird and wonderful world. He takes us to the frontiers of our knowledge: to the most minute reaches of the fabric of space, back to the origins of the cosmos, and into the workings of our minds. "Here, on the edge of what we know, in contact with the ocean of the unknown, shines the mystery and the beauty of the world," Rovelli writes. "And it's breathtaking."

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."

Kristin Hannah’s The Nightingale, hosted by Professor Michael Stoff
Date: Tuesday, August 23
Location: The Stoff Residence
In the quiet village of Carriveau, Vianne Mauriac says goodbye to her husband, Antoine, as he heads for the Front. She doesn't believe that the Nazis will invade France...but invade they do. When a German captain requisitions Vianne's home, she and her daughter must live with the enemy or lose everything. Without food or money or hope, as danger escalates all around them, she is forced to make one impossible choice after another to keep her family alive. Vianne's sister, Isabelle, is a rebellious eighteen-year-old girl, searching for purpose with all the reckless passion of youth. She meets Gaetan, a partisan who believes the French can fight the Nazis from within France, and she falls in love. But when he betrays her, Isabelle joins the Resistance and never looks back, risking her life time and again to save others. Kristin Hannah captures the epic panorama of WWII and illuminates an intimate part of history seldom seen: the women's war. The Nightingale tells the stories of two sisters each embarking on her own dangerous path toward survival, love, and freedom in German-occupied, war-torn France--a heartbreakingly beautiful novel that celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and the durability of women.

On May 17, 2008, at the Plan II Honors Commencement Convocation, President Bill Powers announced the appointment of Professor Stoff as the director of Plan II Honors through 2012. Michael Stoff served as the director ad interim from September 2006 until May 2008. Dr. Stoff is a University Distinguished Teaching Professor and Associate Professor in the Department of History. He received his doctorate from Yale University and serves as co-editor of the Oxford New Narratives in American History. Since 1998, Dr. Stoff has been involved with the Normandy Scholars Program in which students study the Second World War in class and in Europe.

Marjane Satrapi’s Persepolis, hosted by Professor Alexandra Wettlaufer
Date: 
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.

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 looks forward to welcoming the Plan II class of 2020 to Austin!
Jennifer 8. Lee’s *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food Cosmicomics*, hosted by Professor Chiu-Mi Lai

Date:
Location: The Lai Residence

Jennifer 8. 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.

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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.

Samir Kassir’s *Being Arab*, hosted by Professor Yoav Di-Capua

Date: Thursday, September 1
Location: On campus

Before his assassination in 2005, Samir Kassir was one of Lebanon’s foremost public intellectuals. Kassir turns to the past, revisiting the Arab “golden age,” the extraordinary nineteenth-century flowering of cultural expression that continued into the twentieth as, from Cairo to Baghdad and from Beirut to Casablanca, painters, poets, musicians, playwrights and novelists came together to create a new, living Arab culture. Considering the huge impact of modernity on the region, and the accompanying shockwaves that turned society upside-down, Kassir states that the current crisis in Arab identity lies in the failure to come to terms with modernity, turning instead to false solutions such as pan-Arabism and Islamism. *Being Arab* is a clarion call, urging Arabs to embrace their own history, to reject Western double standards and Islamism alike, and to take the future of the region into their own hands.

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Yoav Di-Capua is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Texas at Austin, where he teaches modern Arab intellectual history. He is the author of *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (University of California Press, 2009). His second book, *No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean Paul Sartre and Decolonization*, will be published next year. His research is supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the University of Texas Humanities Research Award.

Eula Biss’s *Notes from No Man’s Land*, hosted by Professor Matt Valentine

Date:
Location:

Often described as a book about race, Eula Biss’s *Notes From No Man’s Land: American Essays* is an exploration of history, culture, religion, politics, literature and music. As the subtitle suggests, this is really a book about the complexity of American experience, recounted in lyrical prose by one of our most gifted nonfiction writers. *Notes From No Man’s Land* won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism.

**Bonus:** Professor Valentine will be hosting the author for a campus visit in October, as part of the Plan II Program’s endowed guest lecture series. Students who enjoy this book will have an opportunity this fall to meet the author and hear her speak about her newest book, *On Immunity: An Inoculation*
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.

Lauren Binet’s *HHhH*, hosted by Professor Judith Coffin

**Date:**

**Location:**

*HHhH*, which won the Goncourt prize in 2010, is about about two members of the Czech resistance, Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš, and their 1942 assassination of one of central figures of the Nazi high command, Reinhard Heydrich in Prague. *HHhH* reads like a detective story. It’s not military or political history, though you learn plenty about Prague during World War II. *HHhH* is also interlaced with the author’s account of the process of researching and writing the book, his commentary about other literary and media treatments of the subject, and reflections about the extent to which the behavior of real people may of necessity be fictionalised in a historical novel. The author (who’s a writer and a professor) has smart and provocative things to say about history, fiction, and the process of writing both.

Judy Coffin teaches courses in European history: the French Revolution (Fall, 2014), 20th century France (in the Normandy program), and Western Civ. for Plan II as well as graduate and undergraduate seminars in various topics. She directed the honors program in History History Honors for ten years. She is writing a book about ordinary readers’ letters to Simone de Beauvoir, called *Simone de Beauvoir and Mid-Century Sex* and is also working on a project about the history of radio.

William Shakespeare’s *Othello*, hosted by Professor Wayne Rebhorn

**Date:**

**Location:**

*Othello* is unique among Shakespeare’s great tragedies. Unlike *Hamlet, King Lear, and Macbeth*, which are set against a backdrop of affairs of state and which reverberate with suggestions of universal human concerns, *Othello* is set in a private world and focuses on the passions and personal lives of its major figures. Indeed, it has often been described as a "tragedy of character"; Othello’s swift descent into jealousy and rage and Iago's dazzling display of villainy have long fascinated students and critics of the play. Written in 1604, *Othello* is one of Shakespeare’s most highly concentrated, tightly constructed tragedies. Although he adapted the plot of his play from the sixteenth-century Italian dramatist and novelist Giraldi Cinthio’s *Gli Hecatommithi*, Shakespeare related almost every incident directly to the development of Iago’s schemes and Othello’s escalating fears. This structure heightens the tragedy’s ominous mood and makes the threat to both Desdemona’s innocence and the love she and Othello share more terrifying. Although narrow in scope, *Othello*, with its intimate domestic setting, is widely regarded as the most moving of Shakespeare’s great tragedies.

Judy Coffin teaches courses in European history: the French Revolution (Fall, 2014), 20th century France (in the Normandy program), and Western Civ. for Plan II as well as graduate and undergraduate seminars in various topics. She directed the honors program in History History Honors for ten years. She is writing a book about ordinary readers’ letters to Simone de Beauvoir, called *Simone de Beauvoir and Mid-Century Sex* and is also working on a project about the history of radio.

Euripides’s *Bacchae; Translated by Paul Woodruff* (Hackett Publishing), hosted by Professor Paul Woodruff

**Date:**

**Location:**
What’s a guy to do when his mom falls into the clutch of a religious cult? She’s under the spell of a young priest who’s pretty as a girl and tricks all the women into dancing in the high mountains. You are sure that these women are up to all kinds of orgies; that’s why they go where men can’t see them. You’ve just been made king, even though you’re only nineteen, and it’s up to you to protect your people from this hideous cult. So what do you do? You send in the troops, but that doesn’t help. So you decide to check things out yourself. The women in the cult do not welcome men, so you’d better go in disguise—in drag, in fact. This will not end well. Read the play in the Woodruff translation with Elvis on the cover.

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Paul Woodruff teaches philosophy and translates Greek plays. Translating the Bacchae gave him the idea for writing a book on reverence, which came out in 2001. For fifteen years he directed the Plan II Honors Program, and then started the School of Undergraduate Studies as the first dean. Now he only teaches.

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Ellen Forney’s Marbles, hosted by Professor Steve Sonnenberg

Date: Wednesday, August 24
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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I’m a physician, my specialty is psychiatry, I am also a medical humanities scholar. I teach 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. I co-teach a TC, “Myths of War and Violence,” with Prof. Tom Palaima, and in the spring of 2017 I will teach a new TC, “The Doctor, The Patient, The Society, The Culture.” I have supervised (as supervisor or reader) nineteen Plan II theses. Everything I teach reflects my special interest in medical humanities. I’m also Faculty Advisor to the Plan II Premedical Society.

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James Hogg’s The Private Memoirs and Confessions of A Justified Sinner, hosted by Professor George Christian

Date: Thursday, August 25
Location: The Christian Residence

This Scottish novel tells a version of the Faust story, in which a young man with libertine proclivities falls under the power of a kind of criminal mastermind who induces the man to commit a series of murders. The novel questions the nature and psychology of evil, the legitimacy of moral values, and the viability of the Enlightenment project. It’s also not too long!

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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.