



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

FACULTY OF
ARTS

10 GREAT BOOKS 2017

**February – November,
Tuesday evenings, 6.15pm – 8.15pm**

The Faculty of Arts proudly presents *10 Great Books – a Melbourne Masterclass* – designed to challenge, revise, and reveal the legacy of great books. Each month, from February to November, we explore a great book in a supportive and lively masterclass environment, guided by an internationally renowned academic.

Tue 21 Feb | Alain-Fournier, *The Lost Estate (Le Grand Meaulnes)*, 1913 by Professor Peter McPhee

Tue 21 Mar | Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, 1964 by Professor Glyn Davis

Tue 11 Apr | Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (Wealth of Nations)*, 1776 by Dr Dan Halliday

Tue 16 May | Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 1859 by Dr James Bradley

Tue 20 Jun | Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 1962 by Associate Professor Sara Wills

Tue 18 Jul | David Malouf, *Johnno*, 1975 by Maxine McKew

Tue 15 Aug | *Qur'an* by Professor Abdullah Saeed

Tue 19 Sep | Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, 1499 by Dr Catherine Kovesi

Tue 17 Oct | Euripides, *Medea*, 431 BC by Professor Rachel Fensham

Tue 21 Nov | Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard (Il Gattopardo)*, 1958 by Professor Mark Considine, with special commentary by Dr Mark Nicholls

FEBRUARY

Alain-Fournier, *The Lost Estate (Le Grand Meaulnes)*, 1913

When the French newspaper *Le Monde* surveyed its readers in 1999 about “Which books from the twentieth century have remained in your memory?”, *Le Grand Meaulnes* polled 9th of 100. The title refers to seventeen-year-old Augustin Meaulnes, whose relationships with the younger François Seurel and Yvonne de Galais are at the heart of the novel. The title – literally ‘big’ or ‘great’ Meaulnes – refers to his charisma and mystery, and inspired F. Scott Fitzgerald’s choice of title for *The Great Gatsby*. That’s where the parallels end, for Alain-Fournier’s novel explores the meanings of friendship, romantic passion and adolescence in a distinctive rural setting in central France. Generations of French readers have found in it, too, an evocation of a world that was about to be destroyed by war, like the author himself.



Emeritus Professor Peter McPhee

Emeritus Professor Peter McPhee AM has published widely on the history of modern France, most recently *Robespierre: a Revolutionary Life* (2012) and *Liberty or Death: The French Revolution 1789-1799* (2016). He was appointed to the position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Melbourne in 2003 and was the University’s first Provost in 2007-09.

MARCH

Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, 1964

Donald Horne’s memorable book of essays on Australia, *The Lucky Country*, became a publishing phenomenon on its release in 1964. It was a rare book, couched in strong intellectual tone but also addressing a broad reading public on questions of national character. The book’s most famous line – “Australia is a lucky country, run by second-rate people who share its luck” – was added almost as an afterthought when the book was near complete. Yet the comment became emblematic of Horne’s approach as a public intellectual – a writer, journalist, educator, critic and controversialist who helped shape the very idea of a national conversation for Australia. This class, led by a former Honours student of Donald Horne, will explore the text of *The Lucky Country*, its inspiration and its influence in later decades.



Professor Glyn Davis

Presented by political scientist Professor Glyn Davis, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne. His most recent publications include *The Craft of Governing* – the contribution of Patrick Weller to Australian Political Science (2014; ed. With Rhodes R.A.W.) and *The Republic of Learning* (Boyer lectures, ABC Books 2010).

APRIL

Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (*Wealth of Nations*), 1776

Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* is a pioneering attempt to explain the workings of market society, and to provide a genuinely moral defence of such society. Markets and industry have changed dramatically since Smith's day, so much that his optimism strikes many modern scholars as naïve. Yet there is much in Smith that helps us identify which aspects of our economic *status quo* we ought to change, and which we might protect and encourage. The enduring value of Smith's book is in showing why capitalism was considered morally attractive in the first place, and whether one who first sought to defend it would have approved of how things have turned out since.



Dr Dan Halliday

Dan Halliday works mainly on topics at the intersection of political philosophy and public policy, such as taxation, education, and healthcare. He has recently completed a book, titled *Social Justice and Inherited Wealth*, which will be published in 2017 with Oxford University Press. Dan has been teaching at Melbourne University since 2011, after completing a PhD in political philosophy at Stanford University.

MAY

Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 1859

Has any scientific book had the impact of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859)? It appears unlikely. For unlike the works of, say, Newton or Einstein, Darwin's big idea of evolution through natural selection spoke directly to what it means to be human – even though he barely mentioned *homo sapiens* in this, his best known work. *Origin* is rightly regarded as one of the most important books ever published. The agenda that Darwin set in 1859 remains firmly embedded in the mission of the natural sciences, while continuing to influence theological, political and social debates.



Dr James Bradley

James Bradley lectures in the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Melbourne. Aside from teaching a number of subjects, including "Darwinism: History of a Very Big Idea", he is the co-author, with Rod Buchanan, of an extended piece about Darwin's delay in publishing his theory that will soon appear in the journal *I/sis*. He is currently researching the relationship between physiology and vivisection in nineteenth-century Britain and writing a biography of the surgeon Sir Charles Bell.

JUNE

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 1962

Silent Spring is recognised by many as the environmental text that 'changed the world', with naturalist David Attenborough stating that it is probably the most influential science book after *On the Origin of Species*. Beginning with a 'fable for tomorrow' – using a composite of examples drawn from observation of real communities – author Rachel Carson first documented the effects on the environment of pesticides such as DDT. It met with fierce opposition by industry, but *Silent Spring* would spur a reversal in national pesticide policy, lead to a nationwide ban on DDT for agricultural uses, and inspire the modern environmental movement.



Associate Professor Sara Wills

Sara Wills is the Associate Dean for Engagement and Advancement in the Faculty of Arts. She coordinates the Executive Master of Arts in which she teaches a subject called 'The Power of Ideas: Ten Great Books'. Known mainly as a historian of migration, her earliest research was on the development of environmental thinking in the nineteenth century and its elaboration into the twentieth century.

JULY

David Malouf, *Johnno*, 1975

In 1972 David Malouf sat down in a rented Florentine apartment and wrote his first novel. The result, *Johnno*, was published in 1975 and it was not about a room with a view in one of Europe's oldest and loveliest cities. Instead, it centred on a remembered boyhood relationship in the garrison town of wartime Brisbane. Patrick White described *Johnno* "as one of the best books by an Australian" and praised Malouf for finding the only way to write about the love of two men for one another. This Masterclass will consider the complexities of the Johnno/Dante relationship - both the longing and the shame - as well as the ways in which Australia's sultry northern city has helped shape the literary imagination of late twentieth century writers such as David Malouf.



Maxine McKew

Presented by Maxine McKew, Hon Fellow of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, formerly Vice Chancellor's Fellow. Writer and board director, her most recent publication, *Class Act*, considers some of the biggest challenges in Australian schooling. This followed the success of her political memoir *Tales From the Political Trenches*. Maxine's background is in politics and journalism. In 1998 she conducted a lengthy interview with David Malouf for *Lateline* as he prepared to present that year's ABC Boyer Lecture, *A Spirit of Play*.

AUGUST

Qur'an, 7thc. C.E.

The Qur'an is the most important text for Muslims who today comprise well over twenty percent of the world's population. It is the primary source of guidance for Muslims and the foundation of Islam's creeds, rituals, ethics and laws. It was the foundation of the Islamic civilisation that brought together people of different religious traditions and contributed much to the world in sciences, philosophy, culture and art for many centuries. As a text, the Qur'an is relatively short, roughly the size of the New Testament, and is a fascinating book like any other scripture of a major religion. The centrality of this text in today's discourses on politics, culture and law as well as interreligious relations in Muslim societies is very visible to all of us and this presentation will explore the importance of this text in today's social climate.



Professor Abdullah Saeed

Abdullah Saeed is currently the Sultan of Oman Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies and Director of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Among his publications are *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-First Century* (2014); *Islam and Human Rights* (edited, 2012); *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (2008); and *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (2006). Professor Saeed works closely with various national and international organisations and contributes to their projects relating to Islam and Islamic thought. He is currently a member of the UNESCO Commission of Australia of the Department of Foreign Affairs of Australia. He contributes to print and electronic media on Islamic issues. He was awarded Order of Australia (AM) in 2013.

SEPTEMBER

Francesco Colonna (?), *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, 1499

The *Hypnerotomachia poliphili* - unpronounceable, unreadable, authorship and artist/s disputed. Yet this is the most famous book ever printed, and the 1499 first edition in the Baillieu is the most expensive purchase the library has ever made. So why the fuss? The *Hypnerotomachia's* language, message, racy content, commissioning and disputed authorship in a time of increased censorship by the Church in Venice, have long fascinated scholars. But so too has its stunning illustrations and their integration into the text, its font, and layout, all of which set a new benchmark for the possibilities of book production in the fledgling age of print. This lecture will unravel some of the mysteries behind this most celebrated of books.



Dr Catherine Kovesi

Catherine Kovesi is an historian at the University of Melbourne. Her research and publications focus on debates surrounding luxury and ethical consumption in early modern Italy with publications such as *Sumptuary Law in Italy 1200-1500* and the forthcoming edited *Luxury and the Ethics of Greed in Early Modern Italy*. She has an especial interest in the history of Venice, and has been taking students from Melbourne to Venice for many years.

OCTOBER

Euripides, *Medea* 431 BC

Does Euripides's play, *Medea*, depict the drama of the older wife spurned for a younger newer woman? Or, is it the tragedy of a foreigner trying to become recognised in a strange country? What, however, the chorus witness is the macabre revenge of a woman who kills her children in cold blood. As with most ancient Greek drama, this play powerfully addresses questions of justice, gender, and civic belonging. And with an emblematic outsider in the title role, productions of *Medea* also confront the contradictions of a society in flux.



Professor Rachel Fensham

Professor Rachel Fensham is the Assistant Dean of the Digital Studio in the Faculty of Arts and a dance and theatre studies scholar. She is completing a book on costume history in twentieth century concert dance, and has written extensively on theatre reception, feminist performance and digital archives in academic journals and arts reviews. Her most recent books include the co-edited volume, *Dancing Naturally* (2011), and *To Watch Theatre* (2009).

NOVEMBER

Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard (Il Gattopardo)*, 1958

Regarded as one of the greatest historical novels of its day, *The Leopard* was written by a Sicilian nobleman with the impressive name and titles of Giuseppe Tomasi, Duke of Palma and Prince of Lampedusa. He was a man of both science and culture and a fan of Stendhal and of the European literary canon. He published nothing during his lifetime but left behind this single masterpiece. It is the story of a traditional way of life in decline as Garibaldi lands in Sicily and the Bourbon monarchy based in Naples is defeated. A new order of middle classes and dubious characters is thrusting forward and the old Prince and his family face these new realities with regret and with humour. The story is full of disarming personal characters and lyrical episodes of family and traditional life on the great estates and great houses of Sicily.

The book was a runaway success when it was published by Feltrinelli in Milan as *Il Gattopardo* in 1958 and has since had more than one hundred editions. It achieved even greater prominence when the prince of Communist filmmakers, Luchino Visconti, himself a Milanese Count, produced a movie version in 1963 with Burt Lancaster in the title role and Claudia Cardinale as the female lead. Mark Considine will lead the discussion of the book and its insights into our understanding of class, character and social change, then Mark Nicholls will offer an assessment of Visconti's controversial film version and its radical sensibility.



Professor Mark Considine

Mark Considine is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at The University of Melbourne and Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor of Political Science. Mark is a Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia and Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences. Mark's most recent books are: Considine, M., Lewis, J.M, O'Sullivan, S, and Sol, E., (2015) *Getting Welfare to Work: Street-level Governance in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands* (Oxford University Press); and Afzal, Kamran Ali and Considine, Mark, (2015) *Democratic Accountability and International Human Development: Regimes, Institutions and Resources* (Routledge).



Dr Mark Nicholls

Dr Mark Nicholls is Senior Lecturer in Cinema Studies at the University of Melbourne where he has taught film since 1993. Mark is a film journalist and worked for many years on ABC Radio and for The Age newspaper, for which he wrote a weekly film column between 2007 and 2009. Mark has an extensive list of stage credits as a playwright, performer, producer and director.



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or contact Caterina Sciacca, Community Education Manager
caterina.sciacca@unimelb.edu.au, 03 8344 3996.