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Featured Bookshelf: 2018 American History

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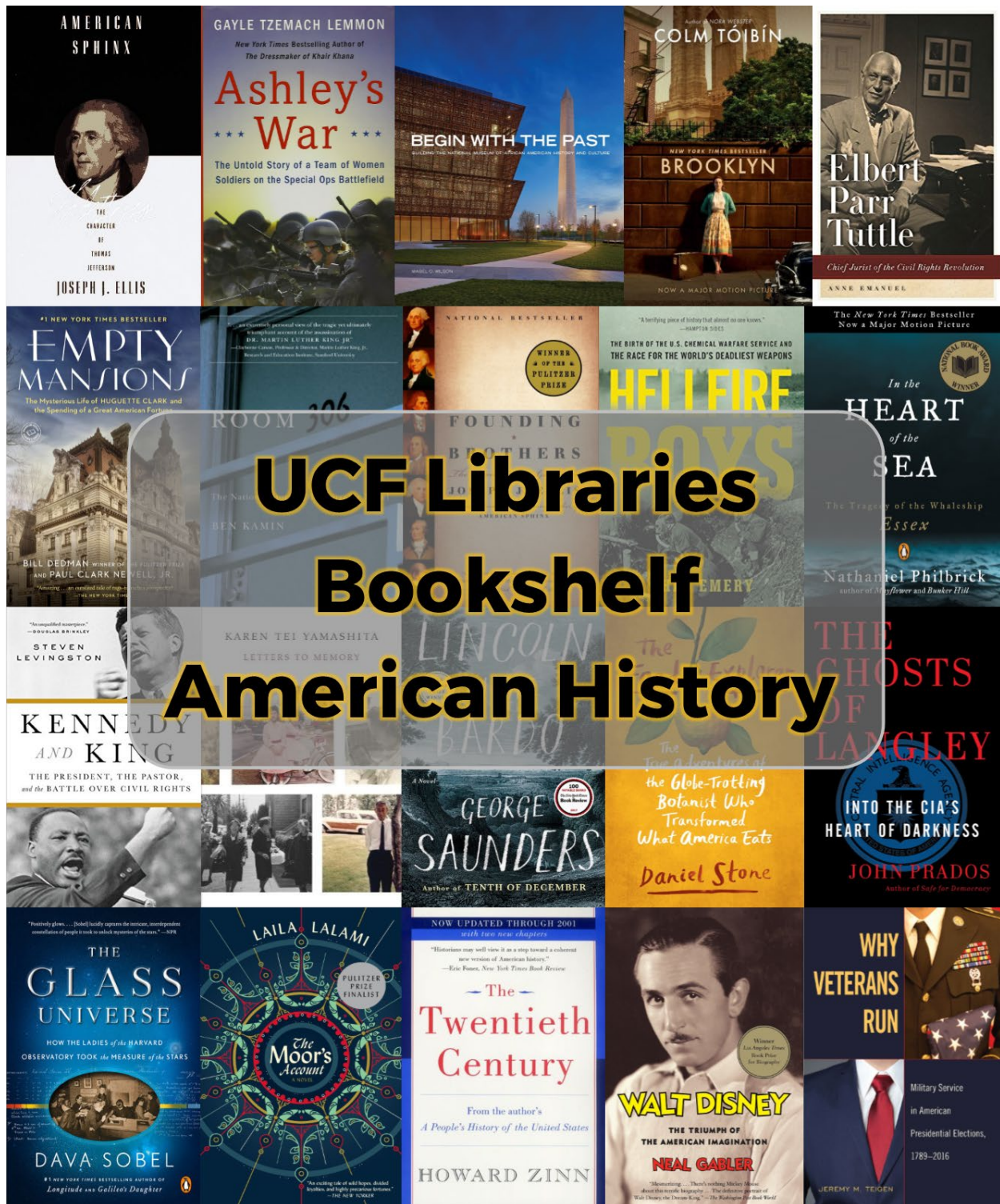
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American history is a broad and varied topic. It ranges from the native inhabitants who formed communities here thousands of years ago to the creation of a new nation of states to the dreamers who immigrate to these shores today. It is a vast tract of information to cover, but it is important that we all

learn about our past. As Edmund Burke said in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, "Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it."

The founders of the United States, beyond their faults and foibles, began this nation with a grand and noble sentiment of "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity...."

"We the people" is *us*. Join us this month as we explore our past to help ensure "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" applies to us all.

Keep reading to see the full list, descriptions, and catalog links for the featured titles on American History suggested by UCF Library employees. These 20 books plus many more are also on display on the 2nd (main) floor of the John C. Hitt Library next to the bank of two elevators.

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[American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson](#) by Joseph Ellis

For the historian Joseph J. Ellis, the experience of writing about Jefferson was "as if a pathologist, just about to begin an autopsy, has discovered that the body on the operating table was still breathing." In *American Sphinx*, Ellis sifts the facts shrewdly from the legends and the rumors, treading a path between vilification and hero worship in order to formulate a plausible portrait of the man who still today "hover[s] over the political scene like one of those dirigibles cruising above a crowded football stadium, flashing words of inspiration to both teams." For, at the grass roots, Jefferson is no longer liberal or conservative, agrarian or industrialist, pro- or anti-slavery, privileged or populist. He is all things to all people. His own obliviousness to incompatible convictions within himself (which left him deaf to most forms of irony) has leaked out into the world at large--a world determined to idolize him despite his foibles.

Suggested by Larry Cooperman, Research & Information Services

[Ashley's War: the untold story of a team of women soldiers on the Special Ops battlefield](#) by Gayle Tzemach Lemmon

In 2010, the Army created Cultural Support Teams, a secret pilot program to insert women alongside Special Operations soldiers battling in Afghanistan. The Army reasoned that women could play a unique role on Special Ops teams: accompanying their male colleagues on raids and, while those soldiers were searching for insurgents, questioning the mothers, sisters, daughters and wives living at the compound. Their presence had a calming effect on enemy households, but more importantly, the CSTs were able to search adult women for weapons and gather crucial intelligence. They could build relationships—woman to woman—in ways that male soldiers in an Islamic country never could. In *Ashley's War*, Gayle Tzemach Lemmon uses on-the-ground reporting and a finely tuned understanding of the complexities of war to tell the story of CST-2, a unit of women hand-picked from the Army to serve in this highly specialized and challenging role. The pioneers of CST-2 proved for the first time, at least to some grizzled Special Operations soldiers, that women might be physically and mentally tough enough to become one of them. The price of this professional acceptance came in personal loss and social isolation: the only

people who really understand the women of CST-2 are each other. Ashley's War is a gripping combat narrative and a moving story of friendship—a book that will change the way readers think about war and the meaning of service.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Teaching & Engagement/Research & Information Services

[Begin With the Past: building the national museum of African American history & culture](#) by Mabel O. Wilson

Begin with the Past presents the long history of efforts to build a permanent place to collect, study, and present African American history and culture. In 2003, the museum was officially established at long last, yet the work of the museum was only just beginning. The National Museum of African American History and Culture is a place for all Americans to understand our past and embrace our future, and this book is a testament to the inspiration and determination that went into creating this unique place.

Suggested by Richard Harrison, Subject Librarian

[Brooklyn](#) by Colm Toibin

From the award-winning author of *The Master*, a hauntingly compelling novel—by far Tóibín's most accessible book—set in Brooklyn and Ireland in the early 1950s about a young woman torn between her family in Ireland and the American who wins her heart.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

[Elbert Parr Tuttle: Chief Jurist of the Civil Rights Revolution](#) by Anne Emanuel

This is the first—and the only authorized—biography of Elbert Parr Tuttle (1897–1996), the judge who led the federal court with jurisdiction over most of the Deep South through the most tumultuous years of the civil rights revolution. By the time Tuttle became chief judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, he had already led an exceptional life. He had cofounded a prestigious law firm, earned a Purple Heart in the battle for Okinawa in World War II, and led Republican Party efforts in the early 1950s to establish a viable presence in the South. But it was the inter-section of Tuttle's judicial career with the civil rights movement that thrust him onto history's stage.

Suggested by Richard Harrison, Subject Librarian

[Empty Mansions: the mysterious life of Huguette Clark and the spending of a great American fortune](#) by Bill Dedman and Paul Clark Newell, Jr.

Empty Mansions reveals a complex portrait of the mysterious Huguette and her intimate circle. We meet her extravagant father, her publicity-shy mother, her star-crossed sister, her French boyfriend, her nurse who received more than \$30 million in gifts, and the relatives fighting to inherit Huguette's copper fortune. Richly illustrated with more than seventy photographs, Empty Mansions is an enthralling story of an eccentric of the highest order, a last jewel of the Gilded Age who lived life on her own terms.

Suggested by Sandy Avila, Research & Information Services

[Founding Brothers: The revolutionary generation](#) by Joseph Ellis

Ellis focuses on six discrete moments that exemplify the most crucial issues facing the fragile new nation: Burr and Hamilton's deadly duel, and what may have really happened; Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison's secret dinner, during which the seat of the permanent capital was determined in exchange for passage of Hamilton's financial plan; Franklin's petition to end the "peculiar institution" of slaves - his last public act - and Madison's efforts to quash it; Washington's precedent-setting Farewell Address, announcing his retirement from public office and offering his country some final advice; Adams's difficult term as Washington's successor and his alleged scheme to pass the presidency on to his son; and finally, Adams and Jefferson's renewed correspondence at the end of their lives, in which they compared their different views of the Revolution and its legacy.

Suggested by Brian Calhoun, Research & Information Services

[Hellfire Boys: the birth of the U.S. Chemical Warfare Service and the race for the world's deadliest weapons](#) by Theo Emery

Traces the actions of the "Hellfire Battalion," a group of American engineers who were trained in gas warfare and were sent to the front lines in France to launch multiple assaults against the Germans.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Teaching & Engagement/Research & Information Services

[In the Heart of the Sea: the tragedy of the whaleship Essex](#) by Nathaniel Philbrick

In 1820, the whaleship Essex was rammed and sunk by an angry sperm whale, leaving the desperate crew to drift for more than ninety days in three tiny boats. Nathaniel Philbrick uses little-known documents and vivid details about the Nantucket whaling tradition to reveal the chilling facts of this infamous maritime disaster. In the Heart of the Sea, recently adapted into a major feature film starring Chris Hemsworth, is a book for the ages.

Suggested by Sandy Avila, Research & Information Services

[Kennedy and King: the president, the pastor, and the battle over civil rights](#) by Steven Levington

Kennedy and King traces the emergence of two of the twentieth century's greatest leaders, their powerful impact on each other and on the shape of the civil rights battle between 1960 and 1963. These two men from starkly different worlds profoundly influenced each other's personal development. Kennedy's hesitation on civil rights spurred King to greater acts of courage, and King inspired Kennedy to finally make a moral commitment to equality. As America still grapples with the legacy of slavery and the persistence of discrimination, Kennedy and King is a vital, vivid contribution to the literature of the Civil Rights Movement.

Suggested by Richard Harrison, Subject Librarian

[Letters to Memory](#) by Karen Tei Yamashita

Letter to Memory is an excursion through the Japanese internment using archival materials from the Yamashita family as well as a series of epistolary conversations with composite characters representing a range of academic specialties. Historians, anthropologists, classicists—their disciplines, and

Yamashita's engagement with them, are a way for her explore various aspects of the internment and to expand its meaning beyond her family, and our borders, to ideas of debt, forgiveness, civil rights, Orientalism, and community.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

[Lincoln in the Bardo](#) by George Saunders

Lincoln in the Bardo is an astonishing feat of imagination and a bold step forward from one of the most important and influential writers of his generation. Formally daring, generous in spirit, deeply concerned with matters of the heart, it is a testament to fiction's ability to speak honestly and powerfully to the things that really matter to us. Saunders has invented a thrilling new form that deploys a kaleidoscopic, theatrical panorama of voices to ask a timeless, profound question: How do we live and love when we know that everything we love must end?

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

[Room 306: the national story of the Lorraine Motel](#) by Ben Kamin

A tragic landmark in the civil rights movement, the Lorraine Motel in Memphis is best known for what occurred there on April 4, 1968. As he stood on the balcony of Room 306, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, ending a golden age of nonviolent resistance, and sparking riots in more than one hundred cities. Formerly a seedy, segregated motel, and prior to that a brothel, the motel quickly achieved the status of national shrine. The motel attracts a variety of pilgrims—white politicians seeking photo ops, aging civil rights leaders, New Age musicians, and visitors to its current incarnation, the National Civil Rights Museum. A moving and emotional account that comprises a panorama of voices, Room 306 is an important oral history unlike any other.

Suggested by Richard Harrison, Subject Librarian

[The Food Explorer: the true adventures of the globe-trotting botanist who transformed what America eats](#) by Daniel Stone

The true adventures of David Fairchild, a late-nineteenth-century food explorer who traveled the globe and introduced diverse crops like avocados, mangoes, seedless grapes—and thousands more—to the American plate.

Suggested by Christina Wray, Teaching & Engagement

[The Ghosts of Langley: into the CIA's heart of darkness](#) by John Prados

The Ghosts of Langley is a provocative and panoramic new history of the Central Intelligence Agency that relates the agency's current predicament to its founding and earlier years, telling the story of the agency through the eyes of key figures in CIA history, including some of its most troubling covert actions around the world. It reveals how the agency, over seven decades, has resisted government accountability, going rogue in a series of highly questionable ventures that reach their apotheosis with the secret overseas prisons and torture programs of the war on terror.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Teaching & Engagement/Research & Information Services

[The Glass Universe: how the ladies of the Harvard Observatory took the measure of the stars](#) by Dava Sobel

Elegantly written and enriched by excerpts from letters, diaries, and memoirs, *The Glass Universe* is the hidden history of the women whose contributions to the burgeoning field of astronomy forever changed our understanding of the stars and our place in the universe.

Suggested by Christina Wray, Teaching & Engagement

[The Moor's Account](#) by Laila Lalami

In these pages, Laila Lalami brings us the imagined memoirs of the first black explorer of America: Mustafa al-Zamori, called Estebanico. The slave of a Spanish conquistador, Estebanico sails for the Americas with his master, Dorantes, as part of a danger-laden expedition to Florida. Within a year, Estebanico is one of only four crew members to survive. As he journeys across America with his Spanish companions, the Old World roles of slave and master fall away, and Estebanico remakes himself as an equal, a healer, and a remarkable storyteller. His tale illuminates the ways in which our narratives can transmigrate into history—and how storytelling can offer a chance at redemption and survival.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

[The Twentieth Century, a people's history](#) by Howard Zinn

Designed for general readers and students of modern American history, this reissue of the twentieth-century chapters from Howard Zinn's popular *A People's History of the United States* is brought up-to-date with coverage of events and developments since the mid-1980s through President Clinton's first term.

Suggested by Mary Rubin, Special Collections & University Archives

[Walt Disney: the triumph of the American imagination](#) by Neal Gabler

Walt Disney was a true visionary whose desire for escape, iron determination and obsessive perfectionism transformed animation from a novelty to an art form, first with Mickey Mouse and then with his feature films—most notably *Snow White*, *Fantasia*, and *Bambi*. In his superb biography, Neal Gabler shows us how, over the course of two decades, Disney revolutionized the entertainment industry. *Walt Disney* is a revelation of both the work and the man—of both the remarkable accomplishment and the hidden life.

Suggested by Brian Calhoun, Research & Information Services

[Why Veterans Run: military service in American presidential elections, 1789-2016](#) by Jeremy M. Teigen

In *Why Veterans Run*, Jeremy Teigen explains the tendency of parties to elevate those with armed forces experience to run for high office. He describes the veteran candidate phenomenon by examining the related factors and patterns, showing why different eras have more former generals running and why the number of veterans in election cycles varies. With both quantitative and qualitative analysis, *Why Veterans Run* investigates each postwar era in U.S. electoral history and elaborates why so many

veterans run for office. Teigen also reveals how election outcomes with veteran candidates illuminate the relationship between the military and civilian spheres as well as the preferences of the American electorate.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Teaching & Engagement/Research & Information Services

Tumblr post: <https://ucflibrary.tumblr.com/post/175443523366/american-history-is-a-broad-and-varied-topic-it>

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