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Featured Bookshelf: 2020 American History

Megan M. Haught

Univeristy of Central Florida, megan.haught@ucf.edu

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American History Featured Bookshelf



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. America is *us*, the people who live, work, dream, hope and endure on these shores. It is shaped by our ideals and grows as her people do into the future we want for ourselves and future generations. The American dream is not static; it is what we want it to be.

The best way to make an impact and shape our country is to be an engaged citizen. There are so many options available to do this.

- Volunteer in local communities. [VolunteerUCF](#) can help you connect with an organization.
- Join a student group to make a difference here at UCF. The Office of Student Involvement has a [list of almost 800 student organizations](#) that can meet any interest.
- Connect with your federal, state, and local representatives. You can let them know your opinions on pending legislation, volunteer, or even thank them if you think they're doing a good job. Don't know who your legislators are? Check out this list at [USA.gov](#).
- Most importantly, if you haven't done so already, register to vote. Find details for how to register in your home state at [Vote.gov](#). If you're a Florida resident, mail ballots are a practical option that are easy to request. If you're an out of state student, absentee is the simplest way to vote. And pay attention to registration deadlines!

The more informed and engaged we all are as citizens, the better our country becomes. To help with being informed, UCF Libraries has suggested 20 books on American History. Keep reading below to see the full list, descriptions, and catalog links for the featured titles on American History suggested by UCF Library employees.

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[A People's History of the United States](#) by Howard Zinn

Packed with vivid details and telling quotations, Zinn's award-winning classic continues to revolutionize the way American history is taught and remembered.

Suggested by Sandy Avila, Research & Information Services

[Alexander Hamilton, American](#) by Richard Brookhiser

Alexander Hamilton is one of the least understood, most important, and most impassioned and inspiring of the founding fathers. An impoverished immigrant when he first came to American shores at age fifteen, Hamilton defined what it meant to be American in an age when the definition was up for grabs. He pounced on the opportunities available in New York and rose rapidly as a patriot, war hero, prominent lawyer, pioneering journalist, and author of two-thirds of The Federalist Papers. An aide to Washington in the Revolutionary war, he was named the first Secretary of the

Treasury at the age of thirty-two, in which post he audaciously mapped a system of law and finance that almost single-handedly lifted the new nation into a capitalist era.
Suggested by Larry Cooperman, Research & Information Services

[An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#) by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

Today in the United States, there are more than five hundred federally-recognized Indigenous nations comprising nearly three million people, descendants of the fifteen million Native people who once inhabited this land. The centuries-long genocidal program of the US settler-colonial regimen has largely been omitted from history. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz offers a history of the United States told from the perspective of Indigenous peoples and reveals how Native Americans, for centuries, actively resisted expansion of the US empire. Dunbar-Ortiz challenges the founding myth of the United States and shows how policy against the Indigenous peoples was colonialist and designed to seize the territories of the original inhabitants, displacing or eliminating them. Spanning more than four hundred years, this classic bottom-up peoples' history radically reframes US history and explodes the silences that have haunted our national narrative.

Suggested by Jada Reyes, Research & Information Services

[Backlash: what happens when we talk honestly about racism in America](#) by George Yancy

When George Yancy penned a New York Times op-ed entitled 'Dear White America' asking white Americans to confront the ways that they benefit from racism, he knew his article would be controversial. But he was unprepared for the flood of vitriol in response. The resulting blowback played out in the national media, with critics attacking Yancy in every form possible--including death threats--and supporters rallying to his side. Despite the rhetoric of a 'post-race' America, Yancy quickly discovered that racism is still alive, crude, and vicious in its expression. Yancy expands upon the original article and chronicles the ensuing controversy as he seeks to understand what it was about the op-ed that created so much rage among so many white readers.

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

[Beneath a Ruthless Sun: a true story of violence, race, and justice lost and found](#) by Gilbert King

In December 1957, the wife of a Florida citrus baron is raped in her home while her husband is away. She claims a 'husky Negro' did it, and the sheriff, the infamous racist Willis McCall, does not hesitate to round up a herd of suspects. But within days, McCall turns his sights on Jesse Daniels, a gentle, mentally impaired white nineteen-year-old. Soon Jesse is railroaded up to the state hospital for the insane, and locked away without trial. Crusading journalist Mabel Norris Reese cannot stop fretting over the case and its baffling outcome. She pursues the story for years, chasing down leads, hitting dead ends, winning unlikely allies. Bit by bit, the unspeakable truths behind a

conspiracy that shocked a community into silence come to the surface.
Suggested by Rachel Mulvihill, Downtown Campus Library

[Black lives 1900: W. E. B. Du Bois at the Paris exposition](#) edited by Julian Rothenstein

At the 1900 Paris Exposition the pioneering sociologist and activist W.E.B. Du Bois presented an exhibit representing the progress of African Americans since the abolition of slavery. In striking graphic visualizations and photographs (taken by mostly anonymous photographers) he showed the changing status of a newly emancipated people across America and specifically in Georgia, the state with the largest Black population. This beautifully designed book reproduces the photographs alongside the revolutionary graphic works for the first time, and includes a marvelous essay by two celebrated art historians, Jacqueline Francis and Stephen G. Hall.

Suggested by Anna Dvorecky, Cataloging

[Black Power Encyclopedia: from “Black is beautiful” to urban uprisings](#) edited by Akinyele Umoja, Karin L. Stanford, and Jasmin A. Young

Unlike the Civil Rights Movement's emphasis on the rhetoric and practice of nonviolence and social and political goal of integration, Black Power was defined by the promotion of Black self-determination, Black consciousness, independent Black politics, and the practice of armed self-defense. Black Power changed communities, curriculums, and culture in the United States and served as an inspiration for social justice internationally. This unique two-volume set provides readers with an understanding of Black Power's important role in the turbulence, social change, and politics of the 1960s and 1970s in America and how the concepts of the movement continue to influence contemporary Black politics, culture, and identity.

Suggested by Anna Dvorecky, Cataloging

[Fight the Power: African Americans and the Long History of Police Brutality in New York City](#) by Clarence Taylor

A story of resistance, power and politics as revealed through New York City's complex history of police brutality The 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri was the catalyst for a national conversation about race, policing, and injustice. The subsequent killings of other black (often unarmed) citizens led to a surge of media coverage which in turn led to protests and clashes between the police and local residents that were reminiscent of the unrest of the 1960s. Taylor challenges the belief that police reform is born out of improved relations between communities and the authorities arguing that the only real solution is radically reducing the police domination of New York's black citizens.

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

Frederick Douglass: prophet of freedom by David W. Blight

The definitive, dramatic biography of the most important African-American of the nineteenth century: Frederick Douglass, the escaped slave who became the greatest orator of his day and one of the leading abolitionists and writers of the era. As a young man Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) escaped from slavery in Baltimore, Maryland. He was fortunate to have been taught to read by his slave owner mistress, and he would go on to become one of the major literary figures of his time. He wrote three versions of his autobiography over the course of his lifetime and published his own newspaper. His very existence gave the lie to slave owners: with dignity and great intelligence he bore witness to the brutality of slavery.

Suggested by Jada Reyes, Research & Information Services

Healing Our Divided Society: investing in America fifty years after the Kerner Report edited by Fred Harris and Alan Curtis

In 1968, the Kerner Commission concluded that America was heading toward "two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal." Today, America's communities are experiencing increasing racial tensions and inequality, working-class resentment over the unfulfilled American Dream, white supremacy violence, toxic inaction in Washington, and the decline of the nation's example around the world. Fred Harris, the last surviving member of the Kerner Commission, along with Eisenhower Foundation CEO Alan Curtis, re-examine fifty years later the work still necessary towards the goals set forth in The Kerner Report. This timely volume unites the interests of minorities and white working- and middle-class Americans to propose a strategy to reduce poverty, inequality, and racial injustice.

Suggested by Jacqueline Johnson, Cataloging

How Blacks Built America: labor, culture, freedom, and democracy by Joe R. Feagin

Almost all public and scholarly discussion of African Americans accenting their distinctive societal position, especially discussion outside black communities, has emphasized either stereotypically negative features or the negative socioeconomic conditions that they have long faced because of systemic racism. In contrast, Feagin reveals that African Americans have long been an extraordinarily important asset for this country. Without their essential contributions, indeed, there probably would not have been a United States.

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

Immigrant and Entrepreneur: the Atlantic world of Caspar Wistar by Rosalind J. Beiler

Examines the life of 18th century German immigrant and businessman Caspar Wistar. Reevaluates the modern understanding of the entrepreneurial ideal and the immigrant

experience in the colonial era.

Suggested by Cindy Dancel, Research & Information Services

[Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream](#) by Doris Kearns Goodwin

Doris Kearns Goodwin's classic life of Lyndon Johnson, who presided over the Great Society, the Vietnam War, and other defining moments the tumultuous 1960s, is a monument in political biography. As a member of his White House staff, she soon became his personal confidante, and in the years before his death he revealed himself to her as he did to no other.

Suggested by Peggy Nuhn, Connect Libraries

[Never Caught: the Washingtons' relentless pursuit of their runaway slave, Ona Judge](#) by Erica Armstrong Dunbar

When George and Martha Washington moved from their beloved Mount Vernon in Virginia to Philadelphia, then the seat of the nation's capital, they took nine enslaved people with them. Slavery, in Philadelphia at least, was looked down upon. There was even a law requiring slaveholders to free their slaves after six months. Yet George Washington thought he could outwit and circumvent the law by sending his slaves south every six months, thereby resetting the clock. Among the slaves to figure out this subterfuge was Ona Judge, Martha Washington's chief attendant. And, risking everything she knew, leaving behind everyone she loved and had known her entire life, she fled. Here, then, is the story not only of the powerful lure of freedom but also of George Washington's determination to recapture his property by whatever means necessary.

Suggested by Cindy Dancel, Research & Information Services

[Our History is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the long tradition of Indigenous resistance](#) by Nick Estes

In 2016, a small protest encampment at the Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota, initially established to block construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline, grew to be the largest Indigenous protest movement in the twenty-first century, attracting tens of thousands of Indigenous and non-Native allies from around the world. Water Protectors knew this battle for Native sovereignty had already been fought many times before, and that, even after the encampment was gone, their anti-colonial struggle would continue. Nick Estes traces traditions of Indigenous resistance leading to the #NoDAPL movement from the days of the Missouri River trading forts through the Indian Wars, the Pick-Sloan dams, the American Indian Movement, and the campaign for Indigenous rights at the United Nations.

Suggested by Jada Reyes, Research & Information Services

Privateers of the Americas: Spanish American privateering from the US and the influence of geopolitics in the early republic by David Head

Privateers of the Americas examines raids on Spanish shipping conducted from the United States during the early 1800s. These activities were sanctioned by, and conducted on behalf of, republics in Spanish America aspiring to independence from Spain. Because privateering further complicated international dealings during the already tumultuous Age of Revolution, the book also offers a new perspective on the diplomatic and Atlantic history of the early American republic.

Suggested by Cindy Dancel, Research & Information Services

Scenes of Subjection: terror, slavery, and self-making in nineteenth-century America by Saidiya Hartman

In this provocative and original exploration of racial subjugation during slavery and its aftermath, Saidiya Hartman illuminates the forms of terror and resistance that shaped black identity. By looking at slave narratives, plantation diaries, popular theater, slave performance, freedmen's primers, and legal cases, Hartman investigates a wide variety of "scenes" ranging from the auction block and minstrel show to the staging of the self-possessed and rights-bearing individual of freedom. While attentive to the performance of power--the terrible spectacles of slaveholders' dominion and the innocent amusements designed to abase and pacify the enslaved--and the entanglements of pleasure and terror in these displays of mastery, Hartman also examines the possibilities for resistance, redress and transformation embodied in black performance and everyday practice.

Suggested by Jada Reyes, Research & Information Services

Songs of America: patriotism, protest, and the music that made a nation by Jon Meacham & Tim McGraw

From "The Star-Spangled Banner" to "Born in the U.S.A.," Jon Meacham and Tim McGraw take readers on a journey through eras in American history and the songs and performers that inspired us. Meacham chronicles our history, exploring the stories behind the songs, and Tim McGraw reflects on them as an artist and performer. Their perspectives combine to create a unique view of the role music has played in uniting and shaping a nation.

Suggested by Sandy Avila, Research & Information Services

The Cabinet: George Washington and the creation of an American institution by Lindsay Chervinsky

The US Constitution never established a presidential cabinet--the delegates to the Constitutional Convention explicitly rejected the idea. So how did George Washington create one of the most powerful bodies in the federal government? Washington was on his own. Faced with diplomatic crises, domestic insurrections, and constitutional challenges--and finding congressional help lacking--Washington decided he needed a

group of advisors he could turn to. He modeled his new cabinet on the councils of war he had led as commander of the Continental Army. Lindsay M. Chervinsky reveals the far-reaching consequences of Washington's choice.

Suggested by Peggy Nuhn, Connect Libraries

Whiteness of a Different Color: European immigrants and the alchemy of race by Matthew Frye Jacobson

America's racial odyssey is the subject of this remarkable work of historical imagination. Matthew Frye Jacobson argues that race resides not in nature but in the contingencies of politics and culture. In ever-changing racial categories we glimpse the competing theories of history and collective destiny by which power has been organized and contested in the United States. Capturing the excitement of the new field of "whiteness studies" and linking it to traditional historical inquiry, Jacobson shows that in this nation of immigrants "race" has been at the core of civic assimilation: ethnic minorities in becoming American were re-racialized to become Caucasian.

Suggested by Kimberly Montgomery, Cataloging

Tumblr post: <https://ucflibrary.tumblr.com/post/622440787263864832/american-history-is-a-broad-and-varied-topic-it>

Blog post: <https://library.ucf.edu/news/featured-bookshelf-american-history-2020/>