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Featured Bookshelf: 2021 American History

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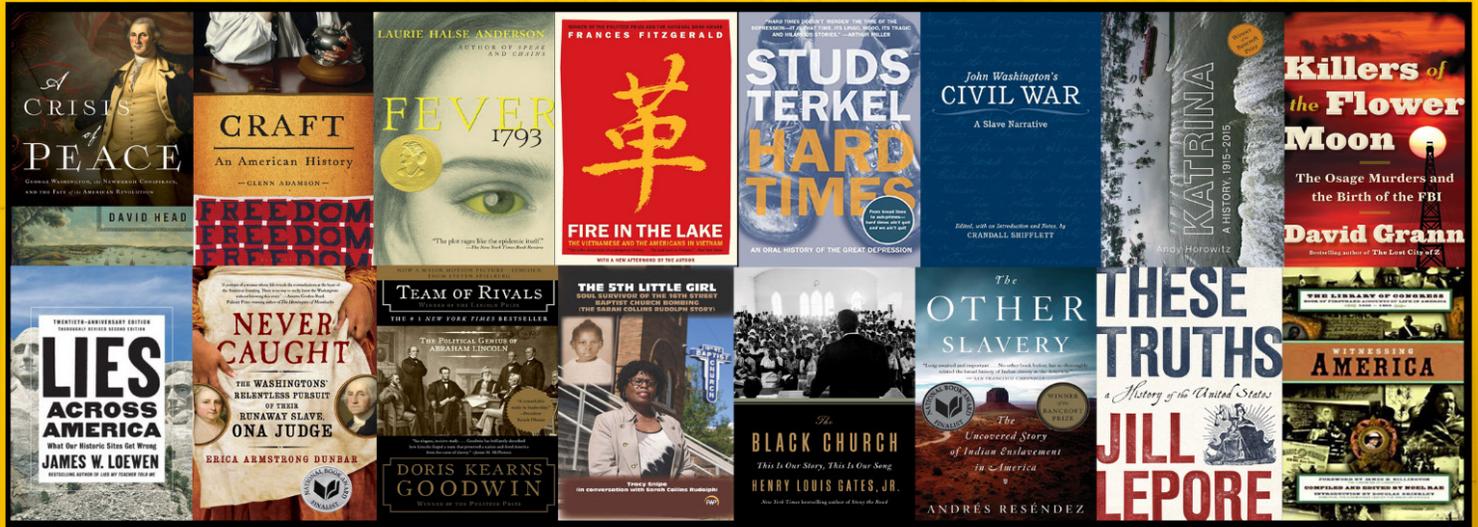
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2021 American History Featured Bookshelf



How do we define American history? Who decides what information is important to study and remember? Do we only look at the 'good' or lionize notable figures by placing them on pedestals and forgetting they were only human? Or do we do the hard work of studying primary sources and reading about all the facets of historic American figures? Do we learn about past mistakes and hidden horrors so we can prevent them from happening in the future?

As an academic library, UCF Libraries is committed to not only teaching our community how to do their own research and providing scholarly resources but to broadening our own horizons and looking critically at our national past. After all, 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 more informed and engaged we all are as citizens, the better our country becomes. To help with being informed, UCF Libraries has suggested 16 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.

For members of the Knight community looking for ways to get involved are many options available:

- 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. If you have voted in previous elections, confirm you are still registered. Find details for how to register in your home state at [Vote.gov](#).

[A Crisis of Peace: George Washington, the Newburgh Conspiracy, and the fate of the American Revolution](#) by David Head

On March 15, 1783, General George Washington addressed a group of angry officers in an effort to rescue the American Revolution from mutiny at the highest level; the Newburgh Affair, a mysterious event in which Continental Army officers, disgruntled by a lack of pay and pensions, may have collaborated with nationalist-minded politicians such as Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and Robert Morris to pressure Congress and the states to approve new taxes and strengthen the central government. Fearing what his men might do with their passions inflamed, Washington averted the crisis, but with the nation's problems persisting, the officers ultimately left the army disappointed, their low opinion of their civilian countrymen confirmed. Head provides a fresh look at the end of the American Revolution while speaking to issues that concern us still: the fragility of civil-military relations, how even victorious wars end ambiguously, and what veterans and civilians owe each other.

Suggested by Cindy Dancel, Research & Information Services

[Craft: an American history](#) by Glenn Adamson

Adamson shows that craft has long been implicated in debates around equality, education, and class. Artisanship has often been a site of resistance for oppressed people, such as enslaved African-Americans whose skilled labor might confer hard-won agency under bondage, or the Native American makers who adapted traditional arts into statements of modernity. Theirs are among the array of memorable portraits of Americans both celebrated and unfamiliar in this richly peopled book. As Adamson argues, these artisans' stories speak to our collective striving toward a more perfect union. From the beginning, America had to be-and still remains to be-crafted.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Student Learning & Engagement/Research & Information Services

[Fever, 1793](#) by Laurie Halse Anderson

In 1793 Philadelphia, sixteen-year-old Matilda Cook, separated from her sick mother, learns about perseverance and self-reliance when she is forced to cope with the horrors of a yellow fever epidemic. Includes discussion questions and related activities.

Suggested by Peggy Nuhn, Connect Libraries

[Fire in the Lake: the Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam](#) by Frances FitzGerald

Originally published in 1972, this was the first history of Vietnam written by an American and won the Pulitzer Prize, the Bancroft Prize, and the National Book Award. With a clarity and insight unrivaled by any author before it or since, Frances FitzGerald illustrates how America utterly and tragically misinterpreted the realities of Vietnam.

Suggested by Sophia Sahr, Student Learning & Engagement

[Hard Times: an oral history of the Great Depression](#) by Studs Terkel

In this "invaluable record" of one of the most dramatic periods in modern American history, Studs Terkel recaptures the Great Depression of the 1930s in all its complexity. Featuring a mosaic of memories from politicians, businessmen, artists, striking workers, and Okies, from those who were just kids to those who remember losing a fortune, this work is not only a gold mine of information but a fascinating interplay of memory and fact, revealing how the 1929 stock market crash and its repercussions radically changed the lives of a generation.

Suggested by Sophia Sahr, Student Learning & Engagement

[John Washington's Civil War: a slave narrative](#) edited by Crandall Shifflett

In 1872, just seven years after his emancipation, a thirty-four-year-old former slave named John Washington penned the story of his life, calling it "Memorys of the Past." One hundred and twenty years later, historian Crandall Shifflett stumbled upon Washington's forgotten manuscript at the Library of Congress. Shifflett presents this remarkable slave narrative in its entirety, with detailed annotations on the mundane and life-changing events that Washington witnessed and recorded.

Suggested by Cindy Dancel, Research & Information Services

[Katrina: a history, 1915-2015](#) by Andy Horowitz

The Katrina disaster was not a weather event of summer 2005. It was a disaster a century in the making, a product of lessons learned from previous floods, corporate and government decision making, and the political economy of the United States at large. New Orleans's history is America's history, and Katrina represents America's possible future.

Suggested by Richard Harrison, Research & Information Services

[Killers of the Flower Moon: the Osage murders and the birth of the FBI](#) by David Grann

Presents a true account of the early twentieth-century murders of dozens of wealthy Osage and law-enforcement officials, citing the contributions and missteps of a fledgling FBI that eventually uncovered one of the most chilling conspiracies in American history.

Suggested by Sandy Avila, Research & Information Services

[Lies Across America: what our historic sites get wrong](#) by James W. Loewen

Loewen looks at more than one hundred sites where history is told on the landscape, including historical markers, monuments, outdoor museums, historic houses, forts, and ships. Loewen uses his investigation of these public versions of history, often literally written in stone, to correct historical interpretations that are profoundly wrong, to tell neglected but important stories about the American past, and, most importantly, to raise questions about what we as a nation choose to commemorate and how.

Suggested by Richard Harrison, Research & Information Services

[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

Team of Rivals: the political genius of Abraham Lincoln by Doris Kearns Goodwin

This multiple biography is centered on Lincoln's mastery of men and how it shaped the most significant presidency in the nation's history. Goodwin illuminates Lincoln's political genius, as the one-term congressman rises from obscurity to prevail over three gifted rivals to become president. When Lincoln emerged as the victor at the Republican National Convention, his rivals were dismayed. That Lincoln succeeded, Goodwin demonstrates, was because of his extraordinary ability to put himself in the place of other men, to experience what they were feeling, to understand their motives and desires. It was this that enabled Lincoln to bring his disgruntled opponents together, create the most unusual cabinet in history, and marshal their talents to the task of preserving the Union.

Suggested by Peggy Nuhn, Connect Libraries

The 5th Little Girl: soul survivor of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing (the Sarah Collins Rudolph story) by Tracy Snipe (in conversation with Sarah Collins Rudolph)

Once described by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as "one of the most tragic and vicious crimes ever perpetrated against humanity," the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Alabama, instantly killed Addie Mae Collins, Carol Denise McNair, Carole Rosamond Robinson, and Cynthia Dionne Morris Wesley on September 15, 1963. This egregious act of domestic terrorism reverberated worldwide. Orchestrated by white supremacists, the blast left twelve-year-old Sarah Collins temporarily blind. In this intimate first-hand account, Sarah imparts her views on topics such as the 50th year commemoration, restitution, and racial terrorism. In the backdrop of a national reckoning and global protests, underscored by the deadly violence at Mother Emanuel in Charleston, SC, and tragedies in Charlottesville, VA, and Pittsburgh, PA, Sarah's unflinching testimony about the '63 Birmingham church bombing is illuminating.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Student Learning & Engagement/Research & Information Services

The Black Church: this is our story, this is our song by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

For the young Henry Louis Gates, Jr., growing up in a small, residentially segregated West Virginia town, the church was a center of gravity--an intimate place where voices rose up in song and neighbors gathered to celebrate life's blessings and offer comfort amid its trials and tribulations. In this tender and expansive reckoning with the meaning of the Black Church in America, Gates takes us on a journey spanning more than five centuries, from the intersection of Christianity and the transatlantic slave trade to today's political landscape.

Suggested by Megan Haught, Student Learning & Engagement/Research & Information Services

The Other Slavery: the uncovered story of Indian enslavement in America by Andres Resendez

Since the time of Columbus, Indian slavery was illegal in much of the American continent. Yet Resendez shows it was practiced for centuries as an open secret: there was no abolitionist movement to protect the tens of thousands of natives who were kidnapped and enslaved by the conquistadors, forced to work in the silver mines, or made to serve as domestics for Mormon settlers and rich Anglos. New evidence sheds light too on Indian enslavement of other Indians as Resendez reveals nothing less than a key missing piece of American history.

Suggested by Richard Harrison, Research & Information Services

[These Truths: a history of the United States](#) by Jill Lepore

In the most ambitious one-volume American history in decades, Lepore offers a magisterial account of the origins and rise of a divided nation, an urgently needed reckoning with the beauty and tragedy of American history. Written in elegiac prose, Lepore's groundbreaking investigation places truth itself--a devotion to facts, proof, and evidence--at the center of the nation's history. The American experiment rests on three ideas--'these truths,' Jefferson called them--political equality, natural rights, and the sovereignty of the people. And it rests, too, on a fearless dedication to inquiry, Lepore argues, because self-government depends on it. But has the nation, and democracy itself, delivered on that promise?

Suggested by Sandy Avila, Research & Information Services

[Witnessing America: the Library of Congress book of firsthand accounts of life in America, 1600-1900](#) edited by Noel Rae

Presents a portrait of America's social and cultural history between 1600 and 1900, told through letters, diaries, memoirs, tracts, and other articles and first-hand accounts found in the collections of the Library of Congress.

Suggested by Peggy Nuhn, Connect Libraries

Tumblr post: <https://ucflibrary.tumblr.com/post/655466176230653953/how-do-we-define-american-history-who-decides>

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