

AP Seminar: Mr. Crossman

Summer Assignments, 2026

Welcome, Gentlemen! AP Seminar begins this summer. Our course requires you to be familiar with many different possible topics and demands that you think deeply about the complexity of these topics. Additionally, there will be quite a bit of reading as well as a requirement to understand the necessary components of a solid, researched presentation. We will need to meet deadlines and share our findings with your peers. Lastly, AP Seminar will push you to learn more about the things you never knew, as well as push you to learn even more about those things you are already passionate about. So let's get going...

This assignment has three components: reading one book (out of five options), viewing two TED or TEDx presentations, and listening to two podcasts.

Part A requires you to do the reading, listening, and watching. **Part B** requires you to write and present what you read, heard, and watched.

THIS IS AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT CLASS FOR MAS SCHOLAR ONLY. READING AND FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUR GRADE. PLEASE READ ALL DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY

IMPORTANT: all work must be completed in **real time** in one single **Google Document**. By *real time*, I mean there should be no "cut and pasted" language from another document or source. You must physically type every word (*no speech to text*) so I can see ALL edits made by you over the summer. DO NOT use Grammarly, ChatGPT, Gemini, or similar compositional assistance. Create the **Google Document** and share it using your Columbus gmail account with kcrossman@columbushs.com BEFORE you begin working on it.

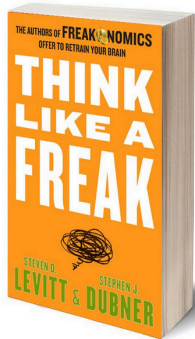
Again, all work must be completed in this document, no PDFs, no Notability, and no "cut and paste" of information into the document. Please title the Document: **SEMINAR SUMMER 26 ASSIGNMENTS** followed by your full name and ID number.

Part A: The Learning Part

Component #1

Thinking Critically: Select and order ONE of the following five texts. Please note that you will need to reserve your chosen text on [THIS DOCUMENT](#) first. Find your tab at the bottom for either period 2 or period 3. Then add your full name and ID# to one of the six available yellow slots for each text. There will be a maximum of six students per text - first come, first served. Once you have reserved on the document, secure a HARDCOPY of the text, read it, annotate it (see [Appendix 1](#)), bring it to class on the first day back, and be prepared to discuss the ideas presented the first week back.

These texts have been selected because they examine the world from various [perspectives](#). This is a word we will use regularly this year. The primary lenses or perspectives that dominate each book is noted at the bottom of the title description in [blue](#)



OPTION #1: Think Like a Freak

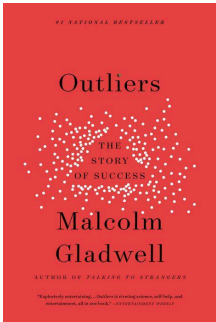
Put away your moral compass. Learn to say "I don't know." Think like a child. Take a master class in incentives. Appreciate the upside of quitting. . . . And more! **Think Like a Freak** is Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner's most revolutionary book yet. With their trademark blend of captivating storytelling and unconventional analysis, they take us inside their thought process and teach us all to think a bit more productively, more creatively, more rationally—to think, that is, like a Freak.

Levitt and Dubner offer a blueprint for an entirely new way to solve problems whether your interest lies in minor lifehacks or major global reforms. As always, no topic is off-limits. They range from business to philanthropy to sports to politics, all with the goal of retraining your brain. Along the way, you'll learn the secrets of a Japanese hot-dog-eating champion, the reason an Australian doctor swallowed a batch of dangerous bacteria, and why Nigerian email scammers make a point of saying they're from Nigeria.

Never before have such iconoclastic thinkers been so revealing—and so much fun to read.” **Primary Lenses: economic, scientific, social**

- ISBN-13 : 978-0062218346

OPTION #2: Outliers

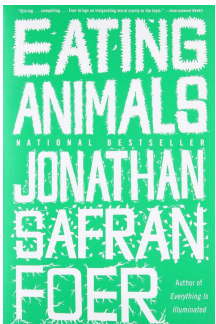


Brilliant and entertaining, **Outliers** is a landmark work. In this stunning new book, Malcolm Gladwell takes us on an intellectual journey through the world of "outliers"--the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different?

His answer is that we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from: that is, their culture, their family, their generation, and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing. Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band. that will simultaneously delight and illuminate. **Primary Lenses: economic, social**

- ISBN-13 : 978-0316017930

OPTION #3: Eating Animals



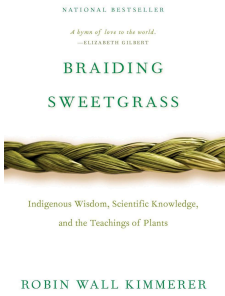
Bestselling author Jonathan Safran Foer spent much of his life oscillating between enthusiastic carnivore and occasional vegetarian. For years he was content to live with uncertainty about his own dietary choices but once he started a family, the moral dimensions of food became increasingly important.

Faced with the prospect of being unable to explain why we eat some animals and not others, Foer set out to explore the origins of many eating traditions and the fictions involved with creating them. Traveling to the darkest corners of our dining habits, Foer raises the unspoken question behind every fish we eat, every chicken we fry, and every burger we grill.

Part memoir and part investigative report, **Eating Animals** is a book that, in the words of the *Los Angeles Times*, places Jonathan Safran Foer "at the table with our greatest philosophers" -and a must-read for anyone who cares about building a more humane and healthy world. **Primary Lenses: ethical, environmental, social**

- ISBN-13 : 978-0316069885

OPTION #4: Braiding Sweetgrass

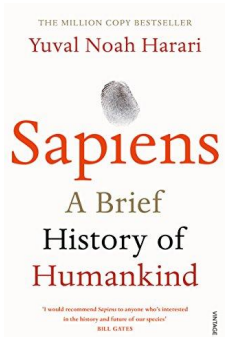


As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In **Braiding Sweetgrass**, Kimmerer brings these two lenses of knowledge together to take us on “a journey that is every bit as mythic as it is scientific, as sacred as it is historical, as clever as it is wise” (Elizabeth Gilbert).

Drawing on her life as an indigenous scientist, and as a woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we've forgotten how to hear their voices. In reflections that range from the creation of Turtle Island to the forces that threaten its flourishing today, she circles toward a central argument: that the awakening of ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings will we be capable of understanding the generosity of the earth, and learn to give our own gifts in return. **Primary Lenses: scientific, environmental, social, historical, ethical**

- ISBN-13 : 978-1571313560

OPTION #5: Sapiens



From renowned historian Yuval Noah Harari comes a landmark work of big history, a groundbreaking narrative of humanity’s creation and evolution—a #1 international bestseller—that explores the ways in which biology and history have defined us and enhanced our understanding of what it means to be “human.”

One hundred thousand years ago, at least six different species of humans inhabited Earth. Yet today there is only one—homo sapiens. What happened to the others? And what may happen to us?

Most books about the history of humanity pursue either a historical or a biological approach, but Dr. Yuval Noah Harari breaks the mold with this highly original book that begins about 70,000 years ago with the Cognitive Revolution and the appearance of modern cognition. From examining the story of human evolution in the global ecosystem to charting the rise of empires, **Sapiens** integrates history and science to reconsider accepted narratives, connect past developments with contemporary concerns, and examine specific events within the context of larger ideas. Dr. Harari also compels us to look ahead, because in the wake of the Scientific Revolution, humans have begun to bend laws of natural selection that have governed life for the past four billion years. We are acquiring the ability to design not only the world around us, but also ourselves. Where is this leading us, and what do we want to become? **Primary Lenses: scientific, social, historical, political**

- ISBN-13 : 978-0062316097

Component #2

Speaking & Presenting: Select **TWO** [TedEd](#) or [TedTalks](#), that interest you. We will be exploring ideas that cross all spectrums in this class so everything is fair game here. I want you to choose something you're interested to learn about (not something you already know a lot about)! Be sure to fill out THIS DOCUMENT to reserve your video.

- Watch two videos on the topic of your choice.
 - These can follow where the discussion takes you. Say the first video you watched was on the artistic style of Expressionism. From there you become intrigued by Renoir, so you continue watching videos on him. That's cool.
 - *Just learn something new!*
- Take notes on the following:
 - What is the name and qualification of the speakers (and title of the presentation)?
 - What makes the speaker effective?
 - What makes the speaker ineffective?
 - How did they use visual aids? Were they distracting? Why? Why not?
 - Who was the best speaker in the videos you watched? Why?
 - Give an overview of the content, purpose, or message of the talk including something interesting that you learned! 2-3 paragraphs per talk.

Component #3:

Listening and Learning: Select **TWO** podcast episodes from the following list of podcasts. You can listen to these on the plane, chilling on the couch, or on that car ride this summer!

[Hidden Brain](#) Shankar Vedantam hosts the social sciences podcast also called Hidden Brain. The thought provoking show explores the unconscious patterns that drive human behavior and questions that lie at the heart of our complex and changing world.

[Radio Lab](#) Radiolab is on a curiosity bender. We ask deep questions and use investigative journalism to get the answers. A given episode might whirl you through science, legal history, and into the home of someone halfway across the world. The show is known for innovative sound design, smashing information into music.

[Freakonomics](#)*** Discover the hidden side of everything with host Stephen J. Dubner, co-author of the Freakonomics books. Each week, Freakonomics Radio tells you things you always thought you knew (but didn't) and things you never thought you wanted to know (but do). *** **do NOT select this if you chose the book Think Like a Freak**

[This American Life](#) *This American Life* is a weekly public radio program and podcast. Each week we choose a theme and put together different kinds of stories on that theme.

[Your Undivided Attention](#) This very intellectual podcast deals with technology at a very high level. The director of this podcast Tristan Harris is a former design Ethicist at Google who is most known for his Netflix original movie about the dangers of Social Media called [The Social Dilemma](#). Watching this movie first may be helpful when attempting to unpack some of his more tech-heavy episodes (the ones on AI and algorithms for example)

[The Great Simplification](#): (click on "episodes") *The Great Simplification* with Nate Hagens is a podcast that explores the systems science underpinning the human predicament. Conversation topics will span human behavior, monetary/economic systems, energy, ecology, geopolitics and the environment. The goal of the show is to inform more humans about the path ahead and inspire people to play a role in our collective future. Guests will be from a wide range of scientists, leaders, activists, thinkers, and doers.

Take notes. Be sure to identify the names of the speakers and the title of the presentation Give a brief overview of the content, purpose, or message of the talk including something interesting that you learned for each one!

Part B: The Written Part

You will need to complete your **SEMINAR SUMMER ASSIGNMENT Google Document** before the 1st full day of school in August. This will be your two **critiques of the two Ted or Tedx presentations**. Each critique should be approximately 3-4 paragraphs in length (covering both the critique and an overview of the content). Be sure to include both the name of the speaker(s) and the presentation(s) for each entry.

Additionally, you will need to provide in your own words, a **synopsis of the two podcasts** you chose. Each summary should be 3-4 paragraphs in length. Be sure to include the name and date of the Podcast you are critiquing

There is no written component due for **Part A** until you return from school

Part B (continued): The Annotations

As early as the 2nd day of class you will be asked to show/share the **annotations** in the **HARDCOPY** of the text you chose to read: Think Like a Freak, Outliers, Eating Animals, Braiding Sweetgrass, or Sapiens. Students without an annotated hardcopy will not receive credit for summer reading.

Lastly, over the next several class periods, students will be called upon to share their understanding of the text (as well as the podcasts and Ted talks) in either verbal or written form. So it is beneficial to read the entire text cover to cover.

(see [Appendix 1](#))

Questions?

If you have any questions after having read this document fully, email me:

kcrossman@columbushs.com

WELCOME TO AP SEMINAR! :)

Appendix 1: Annotation

To *annotate* a text is to interact with a text, being an active reader rather than a passive reader.

While there are no “hard and fast” rules to annotation, there are general guidelines you should follow when annotating a text. These are a few ideas to get you started in your annotations:

1. Underline the main idea of each paragraph or section.
 - a. Underline also the key terminology you should know.
 - b. It does no good to simply underline everything, so be selective and deliberate.
2. Question the things you are confused about in the reading.
 - a. Suggested annotation: a question mark (?) with a word or two to remind you of what you question about the term or passage.
 - b. This should serve as a note to yourself to come back and define something or ask about it in class.
 - c. Yes...that implies that you should do at least a scan AFTER you’ve read something once. 😊
3. Note anything that surprises or shocks you (or that you find interesting).
 - a. Suggested annotation: an exclamation point with a word or two to remind you of what surprised/shocked/amused you.
4. Identify the most important idea of the passage.
 - a. Suggested annotation: an asterisk (*) next to the passage you’ve already underlined.
 - b. Again, don’t overdo the asterisk!
5. Make personal connections to the passage you are reading.
 - a. Suggested annotation: a heart?
 - b. Accompanied with a note along the lines of “this makes me think of...” or “I remember when we discussed...”

Don’t like to write in your books?

- Use Post-It notes!!
 - Tabs...full notes...whatever.
 - This, then, opens up the glorious possibility of color-coding thoughts and ideas!
- Use a separate sheet of paper (or type annotations in Word or Google Docs).
 - This is a little more time-consuming and requires a little more I-dotting and T-crossing.
 - BUT, education theory says that you remember things more when you take the time to write them down separately.
 - Kind of like writing out your vocabulary words longhand as a way to study.
- This isn’t an awful explanation of annotation: <https://prezi.com/ctwiszjrqb7h/why-how-to-annotate-a-text/>