

AAUW 2024-2025 Book List

Meetings are usually the 4th Monday of the month at 3 pm.

September 23, 2024

Book: The Family Chao by Lan Samantha Chang

Leader: Terri Gulyas

Available: Hardcover, e-Book, audio book

Summary: The residents of Haven, Wisconsin, have dined on the Fine Chao restaurant's delicious Americanized Chinese food for thirty-five years, content to ignore any unsavory whispers about the family owners. Whether or not Big Leo Chao is honest, or his wife, Winnie, is happy, their food tastes good and their three sons earned scholarships to respectable colleges. But when the brothers reunite in Haven, the Chao family's secrets and simmering resentments erupt at last.

Before long, brash, charismatic, and tyrannical patriarch Leo is found dead—presumed murdered—and his sons find they've drawn the exacting gaze of the entire town. The ensuing trial brings to light potential motives for all three brothers: Dagou, the restaurant's reckless head chef; Ming, financially successful but personally tortured; and the youngest, gentle but lost college student James. As the spotlight on the brothers tightens—and the family dog meets an unexpected fate—Dagou, Ming, and James must reckon with the legacy of their father's outsized appetites and their own future survival. Brimming with heartbreak, comedy, and suspense, The Family Chao offers a kaleidoscopic, highly entertaining portrait of a Chinese American family grappling with the dark undercurrents of a seemingly pleasant small town.

October 28, 2024

Book: The Woman They Could Not Silence by Kate Moore

Leader: Wendy Schroeder

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, Audio book

Summary: 1860: As the clash between the states rolls slowly to a boil, Elizabeth Packard, housewife and mother of six, is facing her own battle. The enemy sits across the table and sleeps in the next room. Her husband of twenty-one years is plotting against her because he feels increasingly threatened—by Elizabeth's intellect, independence, and unwillingness to stifle her own thoughts. So Theophilus makes a plan to put his wife back

in her place. One summer morning, he has her committed to an insane asylum.

The horrific conditions inside the Illinois State Hospital in Jacksonville, Illinois, are overseen by Dr. Andrew McFarland, a man who will prove to be even more dangerous to Elizabeth than her traitorous husband. But most disturbing is that Elizabeth is not the only sane woman confined to the institution. There are many rational women on her ward who tell the same story: they've been committed not because they need medical treatment, but to keep them in line—conveniently labeled "crazy" so their voices are ignored.

No one is willing to fight for their freedom and, disenfranchised both by gender and the stigma of their supposed madness, they cannot possibly fight for themselves. But Elizabeth is about to discover that the merit of losing everything is that you then have nothing to lose...

November 25, 2024

Book: Sold on a Monday by Kristina McMorris

Leader: Carolyn Reedy

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, Audio book

Summary: 2 CHILDREN FOR SALE. The sign is a last resort. It sits on a farmhouse porch in 1931, but could be found anywhere in an era of breadlines, bank runs and broken dreams. It could have been written by any mother facing impossible choices.

For struggling reporter Ellis Reed, the gut-wrenching scene evokes memories of his family's dark past. He snaps a photograph of the children, not meant for publication. But when it leads to his big break, the consequences are more devastating than he ever imagined.

Inspired by an actual newspaper photograph that stunned the nation.

December 2024 - No Meeting, Happy Holidays

January 27, 2025

Book: Waltraud: A True Story About Growing Up in Nazi Germany by Tammy Borden

Leader: Shirley VerBruggen

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book

Summary: Germany 1937. Life in Waltraud's small village is heartwarmingly simple yet fraught with uncertainty as Nazi ideologies grow ever more radical. Then, war. Her beloved father is forced into Hitler's army and she must cope with the battles raging around her and in her heart as her family

is torn apart.

Bombings, hunger, and gut-wrenching horrors bring Waltraud to the edge of defeat. But she persists, daringly resisting the Nazis by keeping a treasonous secret. Heartache and family strife remain when the bombs stop falling, but a young man with a dark past holds the promise of a better future. To secure it, she must cross forbidden borders. Can Waltraud leave her haunting past behind and take hold of the life she's dreamed of, or will she lose everything trying?

Engaging and evocative, this book pulls back the curtain on what life was like before, during, and after World War II from a German girl's perspective. Capture a rare glimpse into the harrowing struggles of everyday life during the rise and fall of the Third Reich, and one young woman's incredible and courageous journey.

February 24, 2025

Book: Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen by Jose Antonio Vargas

Leader: Terri Gulyas

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, Audio book

Summary: "This is not a book about the politics of immigration. This book—at its core—is not about immigration at all. This book is about homelessness, not in a traditional sense, but in the unsettled, unmoored psychological state that undocumented immigrants like myself find ourselves in. This book is about lying and being forced to lie to get by; about passing as an American and as a contributing citizen; about families, keeping them together, and having to make new ones when you can't. This book is about constantly hiding from the government and, in the process, hiding from ourselves. This book is about what it means to not have a home. After 25 years of living illegally in a country that does not consider me one of its own, this book is the closest thing I have to freedom."

March 24, 2025

Book: How to Say Babylon by Safiya Sinclair

Leader: Lisa Ubbelohde

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, Audio book

Summary: Throughout her childhood, Safiya Sinclair's father, a volatile reggae musician and militant adherent to a strict sect of Rastafari, became

obsessed with her purity, in particular, with the threat of what Rastas call Babylon, the immoral and corrupting influences of the Western world outside their home. He worried that womanhood would make Safiya and her sisters morally weak and impure, and believed a woman's highest virtue was her obedience.

In an effort to keep Babylon outside the gate, he forbade almost everything. In place of pants, the women in her family were made to wear long skirts and dresses to cover their arms and legs, head wraps to cover their hair, no make-up, no jewelry, no opinions, no friends. Safiya's mother, while loyal to her father, nonetheless gave Safiya and her siblings the gift of books, including poetry, to which Safiya latched on for dear life. And as Safiya watched her mother struggle voicelessly for years under housework and the rigidity of her father's beliefs, she increasingly used her education as a sharp tool with which to find her voice and break free. Inevitably, with her rebellion comes clashes with her father, whose rage and paranoia explodes in increasing violence. As Safiya's voice grows, lyrically and poetically, a collision course is set between them.

How to Say Babylon is Sinclair's reckoning with the culture that initially nourished but ultimately sought to silence her; it is her reckoning with patriarchy and tradition, and the legacy of colonialism in Jamaica.

April 28, 2025

Book: The Rulebreaker: The Life and Times of Barbara Walters by Susan Page

Leader: Marilyn Rabideau

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, Audio book

Summary: Barbara Walters was a force from the time TV was exploding on the American scene in the 1960s to its waning dominance in a new world of competition from streaming services and social media half a century later. She was not just a groundbreaker for women (Oprah announced when she was seventeen that she wanted to be Barbara Walters), but also expanded the big TV interview and then dominated the genre. By the end of her career, she had interviewed more of the famous and infamous, from presidents to movie stars to criminals to despots, than any other journalist in history. Then at sixty-seven, past the age of many female broadcasters found themselves involuntarily retired, she pioneered a new form of talk TV called *The View*. She is on the short list of those who have left the biggest imprints on television news and on our culture, male or female. So, who was the woman behind the legacy?

In The Rulebreaker, Susan Page conducts 150 interviews and extensive archival research to discover that Walters was driven to keep herself and her family afloat after her mercurial and famous impresario father attempted suicide. But she never lost the fear of an impending catastrophe, which is what led her to ask for things no woman had ever asked for before, to ignore the rules of misogynistic culture, to outcompete her most ferocious competitors, and to protect her complicated marriages and love life from scrutiny.

Page breaks news on every front—from the daring things Walters did to become the woman who reinvented the TV interview to the secrets she kept until her death. This is the “stunning” (Norah O’Donnell), “brilliantly written” (Andrea Mitchell) account of the woman who knew she had to break all the rules so she could break all the rules about what viewers deserved to know.

May 19, 2025

Book: The First Ladies by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray

Leader: Joanne Rathburn

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, Audio book

Summary: A novel about the extraordinary partnership between First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune—an unlikely friendship that changed the world. Because of their shared belief in women’s rights and the power of education, Mary and Eleanor become fast friends confiding their secrets, hopes and dreams—and holding each other’s hands through tragedy and triumph. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt is elected president, the two women begin to collaborate more closely, particularly as Eleanor moves toward her own agenda separate from FDR...

June 23, 2025

Book: The Worlds I See: Curiosity, Exploration and Discovery at the Dawn of AI by Fei-Fei Li

Leader: Dotty Juengst

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, Audio book

Summary: Known to the world as the creator of ImageNet, a key catalyst of modern artificial intelligence, Dr. Li has spent more than two decades at the forefront of the field. But her career in science was improbable from the start. As immigrants, her family faced a difficult transition from China’s

middle class to American poverty. And their lives were made all the harder as they struggled to care for her ailing mother, who was working tirelessly to help them all gain a foothold in their new land.

Fei-Fei's adolescent knack for physics endured, however, and positioned her to make a crucial contribution to the breakthrough we now call AI, placing her at the center of a global transformation. Over the last decades, her work has brought her face-to-face with the extraordinary possibilities —and the extraordinary dangers—of the technology she loves.

The Worlds I See is a story of science in the first person, documenting one of the century's defining moments from the inside. It provides a riveting story of a scientist at work and a thrillingly clear explanation of what artificial intelligence actually is—and how it came to be. Emotionally raw and intellectually uncompromising, this book is a testament not only to the passion required for even the most technical scholarship but also to the curiosity forever at its heart.

July 28, 2025

Book: Years of Wonder by Geraldine Brooks

Leader: Chris Daleiden

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, Audio book

Summary: Inspired by the true story of Eyam, a village in the rugged hill country of England. When an infected bolt of cloth carries plague from London to an isolated village, a housemaid named Anna Frith emerges as an unlikely heroine and healer. Through Anna's eyes we follow the story of the fateful year of 1666, as she and her fellow villagers confront the spread of disease and superstition. As death reaches into every household and villagers turn from prayers to murderous witch-hunting, Anna must find the strength to confront the disintegration of her community and the lure of illicit love. As she struggles to survive and grow, a year of catastrophe becomes instead *annus mirabilis*, a "year of wonders."

August 25, 2025 - Planning Meeting

September 22, 2025

Book: The Women by Kristin Hannah

Leader: TBD

Available: Hardcover, Paperback, e-Book, Audio book

Summary: Women can be heroes. When twenty-year-old nursing student Frances "Frankie" McGrath hears these words, it is a revelation. Raised in

the sun-drenched, idyllic world of Southern California and sheltered by her conservative parents, she has always prided herself on doing the right thing. But in 1965, the world is changing, and she suddenly dares to imagine a different future for herself. When her brother ships out to serve in Vietnam, she joins the Army Nurse Corps and follows his path.

As green and inexperienced as the men sent to Vietnam to fight, Frankie is over-whelmed by the chaos and destruction of war. Each day is a gamble of life and death, hope and betrayal; friendships run deep and can be shattered in an instant. In war, she meets—and becomes one of—the lucky, the brave, the broken, and the lost.

But war is just the beginning for Frankie and her veteran friends. The real battle lies in coming home to a changed and divided America, to angry protesters, and to a country that wants to forget Vietnam.

The Women is the story of one woman gone to war, but it shines a light on all women who put themselves in harm's way and whose sacrifice and commitment to their country has too often been forgotten. A novel about deep friendships and bold patriotism, The Women is a richly drawn story with a memorable heroine whose idealism and courage under fire will come to define an era.