

**HOW CAN YOU THINK THAT? POLITICAL BOOK CLUB  
READING LIST 2023-2024**

**LATE SUMMER READ**

***TRUE RECONCILIATION***

**How to Be a Force for Change**

*There is one question Canadians have asked Jody Wilson-Raybould more than any other: What can I do to help advance reconciliation? It is clear that people from all over the country want to take concrete and tangible action that will make real change. We just need to know how to get started. This book provides that next step.*

**September 26, 2023**

***FIRE WEATHER: The Making of a Beast***

John Vaillant

From the Publisher's description:

*In May 2016, Fort McMurray, the hub of Canada's petroleum industry and America's biggest foreign supplier, was overrun by wildfire. The multi-billion-dollar disaster melted vehicles, turned entire neighborhoods into firebombs, and drove 88,000 people from their homes in a single afternoon. Through the lens of this apocalyptic conflagration—the wildfire equivalent of Hurricane Katrina—John Vaillant warns that this was not a unique event but a shocking preview of what we must prepare for in a hotter, more flammable world.*

*For hundreds of millennia, fire has been a partner in our evolution, shaping culture, civilization, and, very likely, our brains. Fire has enabled us to cook our food, defend and heat our homes, and power the machines that drive our titanic economy. Yet this volatile energy source has always threatened to elude our control, and in our new age of intensifying climate change, we are seeing its destructive power unleashed in previously unimaginable ways.*

*Vaillant takes us on a riveting journey through the intertwined histories of North America's oil industry and the birth of climate science, to the unprecedented devastation wrought by modern forest fires, and into lives forever changed by these disasters.*

**October 24, 2003**

***THE CHAOS MACHINE***

Max Fisher

From Harvard Book Store Review:

*We all have a vague sense that social media is bad for our minds, for our children, and for our democracies. But the truth is that its reach and impact run far deeper than we have understood. Building on years of international reporting, Max Fisher tells the gripping and galling inside story of how Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social networks, in their pursuit of unfettered profits, preyed on psychological frailties to create the algorithms that drive everyday users to extreme opinions and, increasingly, extreme actions. As Fisher demonstrates, the companies' founding tenets, combined with a blinkered focus maximizing engagement, have led to a destabilized world for everyone.*

*Traversing the planet, Fisher tracks the ubiquity of hate speech and its spillover into violence, ills that first festered in far-off locales to their dark culmination in America during the pandemic, the 2020 election, and the Capitol Insurrection. Through it all, the social-media giants refused to intervene in any meaningful way, claiming to champion free speech when in fact what they most prized were limitless profits. The result, as Fisher shows, is a cultural shift toward a world in which people are polarized not by beliefs based on facts, but by misinformation, outrage, and fear.*

**November 28, 2023**

***DISORDER: HARD TIMES IN THE 21ST CENTURY***

Helen Thompson

Extract from Oxford University Press:

*In Disorder, Helen Thompson examines the current world order, exposing the political shortcomings of the twentieth century and the resultant crises of the early twenty-first century. Her analysis explores three key issues. First, Thompson looks at how, despite three decades of apparent progress in terms of environmentally friendly policy and technology, oil and natural gas prices continue to fuel fierce market competition, as these resources remain*

*at the heart of the energy question. Second, the author examines the financial market complexity favouring special interests that has contributed to economic inequality. And third, she uncovers the large extent to which democratic polities are under strain due to expanding transnational interests and a myriad of international organizations. For Thompson, these trends represent the grim starting-point for the 'hard times in the twenty-first century'.*

**January 23, 2024**

***A BRIEF HISTORY OF EQUALITY***

Thomas Piketty and Steven Randall

From the publisher's description:

*A sustained and sweeping argument and optimistic blueprint for easing global inequality.*

*It's easy to be pessimistic about inequality. We know it has increased dramatically in many parts of the world over the past two generations. No one has done more to reveal the problem than Thomas Piketty. Now, in this surprising and powerful new work, Piketty reminds us that the grand sweep of history gives us reasons to be optimistic. Over the centuries, he shows, we have been moving toward greater equality.*

*Piketty guides us with elegance and concision through the great movements that have made the modern world for better and worse: the growth of capitalism, revolutions, imperialism, slavery, wars, and the building of the welfare state. It's a history of violence and social struggle, punctuated by regression and disaster. But through it all, Piketty shows, human societies have moved fitfully toward a more just distribution of income and assets, a reduction of racial and gender inequalities, and greater access to health care, education, and the rights of citizenship. Our rough march forward is political and ideological, an endless fight against injustice. To keep moving, Piketty argues, we need to learn and commit to what works, to institutional, legal, social, fiscal, and educational systems that can make equality a lasting reality. At the same time, we need to resist historical amnesia and the temptations of cultural separatism and intellectual compartmentalization. At*

*stake is the quality of life for billions of people. We know we can do better, Piketty concludes. The past shows us how. The future is up to us.*

**February 27, 2024**

***EASY MONEY***

***Cryptocurrency, Casino Capitalism and the Golden Age of Fraud***

By Ben McKenzie and Jacob Silverman

From the Publisher Description

*At the height of the pandemic, TV star Ben McKenzie was the perfect mark for cryptocurrency: a dad stuck at home with some cash in his pocket, worried about his family, armed with only the vague notion that people were making heaps of money on something he - despite a degree in economics - didn't entirely understand. Lured in by grandiose, utopian promises... McKenzie dove deep into blockchain, Bitcoin, and the various other coins and exchanges on which they are traded. But after scratching the surface, he had to ask, "Am I crazy, or is this all a total scam?"*

*In Easy Money, McKenzie and journalist Jacob Silverman, embark on an investigative journey into crypto visionaries, Hollywood's biggest true believers, anti-crypto whistleblowers and government operative. Easy Money is an on-the-ground look at a perfect storm of irresponsibility and criminal fraud.*

**March 26, 2024**

***SEEKING SOCIAL DEMOCRACY***

Ed Broadbent

From the publishers's description:

*Part memoir, part history, part political manifesto, Seeking Social Democracy offers the first full-length treatment of Ed Broadbent's ideas and remarkable seven decade engagement in public life. In dialogue with three collaborators from different generations, Broadbent leads readers through a life spent fighting for equality in Parliament and beyond: exploring the formation of his social democratic ideals, his engagement on the international stage, and his relationships with historical figures from Pierre Trudeau and Fidel Castro to Tommy Douglas, René Lévesque, and Willy Brandt. From the formative minority Parliament of 1972-1974, to the*

*contentious national debate over Canada's constitution, to the free trade election of 1988, the book chronicles the life and thought of one of Canada's most respected political leaders and public intellectuals from his childhood in 1930s Oshawa to the present day. Broadbent's analysis also points toward the future, offering lessons to a new generation on how principles can inform action and social democracy can look beyond neoliberalism. The result is an engaging, timely, and sweeping analysis of Canadian politics, philosophy, and the nature of democratic leadership.*

**April 23, 2024**

***WINNING AND KEEPING POWER IN CANADIAN POLITICS***

**Jason Roy (Author), Christopher Alcantara**

From the Publisher's description:

*Do negative campaigns win elections? Do voters abandon candidates accused of scandalous behaviour? Do government apologies affect prospects for re-election? While many people assume the answer to each of these questions is yes, there is limited empirical evidence to support these assumptions. In this book, Jason Roy and Christopher Alcantara use a series of experiments to test these and other commonly held beliefs.*

*Each chapter draws upon contemporary events and literature to frame the issues and strategies. The findings suggest that not all of the assumptions that people have about the best strategies for winning and keeping political power hold up to empirical scrutiny. In fact, some work in ways that many readers may find surprising.*

*Original and innovative in its use of experimental methods, Winning and Keeping Power in Canadian Politics is a persuasive analysis of some of our most prominent and long-standing political myths.*

**May 28, 2024**

***HOW TO BE A DICTATOR***

By Frank Dikotter

From the Publisher Description

*From the Samuel Johnson Prize-winning author of *China after Mao*, a sweeping and timely study of twentieth-century dictators and the development of the modern cult of personality.*

*No dictator can rule through fear and violence alone. Naked power can be grabbed and held temporarily, but it never suffices in the long term. In the twentieth century as new technologies allowed leaders to place their image and voice directly into their citizens' homes, a new phenomenon appeared where dictators exploited the cult of personality to achieve the illusion of popular approval without ever having to resort to elections.*

*In *How to be a Dictator*, Frank Dikotter examines the cults and propaganda surrounding twentieth-century dictators from Hitler and Stalin to Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung. These men were the founders of modern dictatorships, and they learned from each other and from history to build their regimes and maintain their public images. Their dictatorships, in turn, have influenced leaders in the twenty-first century, including Vladimir Putin, Viktor Orban and Xi Jinping.*

*Using a breadth of archival research and his characteristic in-depth analysis, Dikotter offers a stunning portrait of dictatorship, a guide to the cult of personality, and a map for exposing the lies dictators tell to build and maintain their regimes.*

**June 25, 2024**

***Governing Canada: A Guide to the Tradecraft of Politics Paperback***

Michael Wernick

From the Publisher's description:

*What does it really take to govern effectively? Michael Wernick, a career public servant with experience working at the highest levels of Canadian government, shares tips, insider knowledge, and essential advice in this first-ever practical governance handbook. From choosing a Cabinet and getting the most out of it, to delivering on the prime minister's mandate letter, readers will get a close-up look at how day-to-day political work actually happens. Wernick's three decades "in the room" with prime ministers, cabinet ministers, and other members of government make this a*

*must-read not only for politicians, but for anyone who aspires to understand them.*

### **Alternative**

#### ***2030: How Today's Biggest Trends Will Collide and Reshape the Future of Everything***

**By** Mauro F. Guillén

From the Publisher's description:

*Once upon a time, the world was neatly divided into prosperous and backward economies. Babies were plentiful, workers outnumbered retirees, and people aspiring towards the middle class yearned to own homes and cars. Companies didn't need to see any further than Europe and the United States to do well. Printed money was legal tender for all debts, public and private. We grew up learning how to "play the game," and we expected the rules to remain the same as we took our first job, started a family, saw our children grow up, and went into retirement with our finances secure.*

*That world—and those rules—are over.*

*By 2030, a new reality will take hold, and before you know it:*

- *There will be more grandparents than grandchildren*
- *The middle-class in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa will outnumber the US and Europe combined*
- *The global economy will be driven by the non-Western consumer for the first time in modern history*
- *There will be more global wealth owned by women than men*
- *There will be more robots than workers*
- *There will be more computers than human brains*
- *There will be more currencies than countries*

*All these trends, currently underway, will converge in the year 2030 and change everything you know about culture, the economy, and the world.*

*According to Mauro F. Guillen, the only way to truly understand the global transformations underway—and their impacts—is to think laterally. That is,*

*using "peripheral vision," or approaching problems creatively and from unorthodox points of view. Rather than focusing on a single trend—climate-change or the rise of illiberal regimes, for example—Guillen encourages us to consider the dynamic inter-play between a range of forces that will converge on a single tipping point—2030—that will be, for better or worse, the point of no return.*

*2030 is both a remarkable guide to the coming changes and an exercise in the power of "lateral thinking," thereby revolutionizing the way you think about cataclysmic change and its consequences.*