

*This article is a review and includes subjective thoughts, opinions and critiques.*

It is challenging to keep up with your reading goals amid the chaotic quarter system. But now that we've made it to summer, we can hopefully take some time to read without other timely responsibilities hovering at the back of our minds. So if you too want to pick up a book this summer but are not sure which one, we have a recommendation for each major!

**The computer science major: "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep" by Philip K. Dick**

Written in 1968, this dystopian classic — which inspired the infamous "Blade Runner" movies — is set in San Francisco in 2020 following a nuclear global war that left Earth bereft. While humanity has formed colonies outside of Earth with android helpers, some androids have rebelled and come back to Earth. The protagonist, Rick Deckard, is one of many bounty hunters on Earth whose job is to hunt down the androids, but things quickly get complicated as these androids look exactly like real humans. For CS majors who like pondering upon the future implications of AI — or actually enjoyed the ethics class they had to take as a major requirement — this book will be a fun ride!

**The history major: "Kindred" by Octavia Butler**

For the history major who doesn't have time to dive into science or fiction, I recommend this fantastic sci-fi novel from Octavia Butler. A young Black woman writer named Dana is transported back in time to the antebellum South in this action-packed novel. It is a story that explores the intersection of race, gender, history and politics, all while exploring the question of what it means to be "kin." (There is also an HBO show based on it... the novel is better.)

**The engineer: "The Martian" by Andy Weir**

I recommend Andy Weir's books to pretty much any man who says they want to get into reading. Of course, engineering nerds need to pick this one up, too. In 2035, astronaut Mark Watney is presumed dead after an accident during a hurried evacuation of a Mars expedition. But Watney is not dead. Instead, he has to find a way to stay alive on the planet, wondering if he will ever see his crew, or his family, again. We follow his journal entries for years on this alien planet through a novel that manages to be eminently readable while, above all, being deeply *interesting*. This straight sci-fi book gets an easy five stars from me.

**The philosophy major: "On Beauty" by Zadie Smith**

In my opinion, Zadie Smith is one of the great philosophical thinkers of our time. "On Beauty" is a 2005 novel that follows a mixed-race British/American family on the fictional campus of the East Coast Wellington College. When the lives of one family intertwine with another's, issues of liberal and conservative academic values, along with deeper philosophical questions of the nature of beauty and cultural exchange, come to the forefront. The novel is as relevant today as it was when it came out, especially for those living and working on a college campus.

**The communication major: "In Cold Blood" by Truman Capote**

Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood" tells the true story of the 1959 murder of the Clutter family in the small town of Holcomb, Kansas. A deeply researched nonfiction novel, this book is perfect for seeing research and communication come together to tell a story about crime and brutality. The book also places a fascinating focus on the psychological complexities of the killers' minds. Far from being a trashy true crime story, "In Cold Blood" is quintessential American literature.

**The athlete: "Boys in the Boat" by Daniel James Brown**

If you're on the rowing team, you've probably read this one. If not, you're in for a treat. This book follows the University of Washington crew team and their challenges and sacrifices to compete at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. It's historically fascinating, intellectually sound and deeply athletically inspiring: perfect for the Stanford athlete. In between summer workouts, I recommend picking up a copy of Brown's "Boys in the Boat" (especially relevant given Paris 2024).

**The classics major: “The Penelopiad” by Margaret Atwood**

As a classics major, you have likely already read countless books detailing the great journeys of men. And perhaps within these epics, there were a couple of women the men encountered along their journeys. So if you ever get bored of reading about wars that men start, hurdles that men overcome and countries that men rule, pick up a feminist retelling of classic stories that delve deeper into the women’s point of views. Margaret Atwood’s “The Penelopiad” details the story of Odysseus’ s wife Penelope, throughout the timeline of “The Odyssey.” If you ever wondered what Penelope was up to for the 20 years that her husband spent finding his way back to his hometown, or if you’re hungry for a modern and feminist retelling of this tale, this is the book for you!

**The earth systems major: “Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead” by Olga Tokarczuk**

This Polish modern classic follows the story of an old woman living in a rural village after the death of her neighbor. Janina, who in her day-to-day life studies astrology and translates the poetry of William Blake, has a unique love for animals and is their sole defender in a village of hunters. As more people in her town are discovered dead, readers are further exposed to Janina’s obsessive love for animals and her fight to defend their lives in a novel that explores themes of fate, loneliness and justice. If you’re an earth systems major who enjoys vivid descriptions of nature and is tired of being the only voice speaking up for environmental justice, this is a must read.

**The biology major: “The Autobiography of a Transgender Scientist” by Ben Barres**

A neuroscientist at Stanford, Ben Barres pioneered research into glial cells, a type of brain cell that was well overlooked before Barres’ s work. Barres, who passed away in 2017, was known for his work purifying and discovering methods to culture these cells, as well as their roles in human development and degenerative diseases. He was also praised for his mentorship and efforts to uplift the voices of women and minorities in science. His memoir details not only his scientific works and experience in academia, but his journey as a transgender man at Stanford. It will be an inspiring read for all biologists!

**The chemistry major: “Real Life” by Brandon Taylor**

“Real Life” explores the journey of Wallace, a Ph.D. student in biochemistry at a predominantly white midwestern university. Wallace is often troubled by feelings of isolation — not only when he’s staring at nematodes under a microscope, but also as he ponders being the only Black student in his friend group after having moved for the first time from his small hometown to a big campus college. His competence in the lab is questioned for other people’s mistakes, he experiences grief while juggling toxic working hours in academia and his experiences in a white middle-class. For STEM majors who might have experienced imposter syndrome or toxic lab cultures, Wallace’s story will hit close to home.

**The undeclared: “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man” by James Joyce**

This Irish classic follows Stephan Dedalus from his childhood to college years detailing his experience growing up in a Catholic boarding school, his devotion to faith and his eventual move to Dublin and discovery of a new lifestyle. Whether it’s his family’s struggles with poverty or his bewilderment by beauty and love, Stephen is on a constant quest to find his calling in life. If you find yourself contemplating what major to choose, or struggle to constrain your many interests, Stephen’s long journey and his gradual dedication to art will be a fascinating read.

**The gap year-taker: “My Year of Rest and Relaxation” by Ottessa Moshfegh**

I promise I didn’t just pick this one for its title! This fever-dream of a novel follows an unnamed young woman who recently graduated college. Our protagonist and narrator is deeply unhappy with her current life and, with the help of a seriously questionable psychiatrist, takes as many prescription drugs as it takes to sleep for as many hours of the day as possible. The novel delves into mental health and illness, dissatisfaction, and navigating the ins and outs of all types of relationships.