

Annunciation Book Club List – 2017-2018

July 2017

The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde

(fiction, 176 pages)

In this celebrated work, his only novel, Wilde forged a devastating portrait of the effects of evil and debauchery on a young aesthete in late-19th-century England. Combining elements of the Gothic horror novel and decadent French fiction, the book centers on a striking premise: As Dorian Gray sinks into a life of crime and gross sensuality, his body retains perfect youth and vigor while his recently painted portrait grows day by day into a hideous record of evil, which he must keep hidden from the world. For over a century, this mesmerizing tale of horror and suspense has enjoyed wide popularity. It ranks as one of Wilde's most important creations and among the classic achievements of its kind.

Monday July 10, 7PM – Lynn DePietro

Monday July 17, 6PM – Potesta's

August 2017

Becoming Nicole and the Transformation of an American Family by Amy Ellis Nutt

(nonfiction, 313 pages)

When Wayne and Kelly Maines adopted identical twin boys, they thought their lives were complete. But it wasn't long before they noticed a marked difference between Jonas and his brother, Wyatt. Jonas preferred sports and trucks and many of the things little boys were "supposed" to like; but Wyatt liked princess dolls and dress-up and playing Little Mermaid. By the time the twins were toddlers, confusion over Wyatt's insistence that he was female began to tear the family apart. In the years that followed, the Maineses came to question their long-held views on gender and identity, to accept and embrace Wyatt's transition to Nicole, and to undergo an emotionally wrenching transformation of their own that would change all their lives forever.

Monday August 7, 7PM – Clara Celebuski

Monday August 21, 6PM – Potesta's

September 2017

Plainsong by Kent Haruf

(fiction, 320 pages)

In the small town of Holt, Colorado, a high school teacher is confronted with raising his two boys alone after their mother retreats first to the bedroom, then altogether. A teenage girl—her father long since disappeared, her mother unwilling to have her in the house—is pregnant, alone herself, with nowhere to go. And out in the country, two brothers, elderly bachelors, work the family homestead, the only world they've ever known. From these unsettled lives emerges a vision of life, and of the town and landscape that bind them together—their fates somehow overcoming the powerful circumstances of place and station, their confusion, curiosity, dignity and humor intact and resonant. As the milieu widens to embrace fully four generations, Kent Haruf displays an emotional and aesthetic authority to rival the past masters of a classic American tradition.

NOTE: The sequel to this book, *Eventide*, is also on the ballot.

Monday September 11, 7PM – Deb Gallinger

Monday September 18, 6PM – Potesta's

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October 2017

Blood Moon: A Captive's Tale by Ruth Hull Chatlien

BLOOD MOON: A CAPTIVE'S TALE

Southern Minnesota, August 1862. Smoke fills the horizon and blood soaks the prairie as the Sioux fight to drive white settlers from their ancestral homeland. Sarah Wakefield and her young son and baby daughter are fleeing for their lives when two warriors capture them. One is Hapa, who intends to murder them. The other is Chaska, an old acquaintance who promises to protect the family. Chaska shelters them in his mother's tepee, but with emotions running so high among both Indians and whites, the danger only intensifies. As she struggles to protect herself and those she loves, Sarah is forced to choose between doing what others expect of her and following her own deep beliefs.

Monday October 16, 7PM - Church

November 2017

Destiny of the Republic by Candice Milland

(nonfiction, 354 pages)

James A. Garfield was one of the most extraordinary men ever elected president. Born into abject poverty, he rose to become a wunderkind scholar, a Civil War hero, and a renowned and admired reformist congressman. Nominated for president against his will, he engaged in a fierce battle with the corrupt political establishment. But four months after his inauguration, a deranged office seeker tracked Garfield down and shot him in the back. But the shot didn't kill Garfield. The drama of what happened subsequently is a powerful story of a nation in turmoil. The unhinged assassin's half-delivered strike shattered the fragile national mood of a country so recently fractured by civil war, and left the wounded president as the object of a bitter behind-the-scenes struggle for power—over his administration, over the nation's future, and, hauntingly, over his medical care.

Monday November 6, 7PM – Terry Stowell

Monday November 20, 6PM – Potesta's

December 2017

Holiday Potluck

Monday December 4, 6PM – Linda Piepenbrink

January 2018

America's First Daughter by Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie

(fiction, 587 pages)

In a compelling, richly researched novel that draws from thousands of letters and original sources, bestselling authors Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie tell the fascinating, untold story of Thomas Jefferson's eldest daughter, Martha "Patsy" Jefferson Randolph—a woman who kept the secrets of our most enigmatic founding father and shaped an American legacy.

Monday January 8, 7PM – Cindy Pullinger

Monday January 15, 6PM – Potesta's

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February 2018

The Zookeeper's Wife: A War Story by Diane Ackerman

The true story of how the keepers of the Warsaw Zoo saved hundreds of people from Nazi hands. When Germany invaded Poland, Stuka bombers devastated Warsaw--and the city's zoo along with it. With most of their animals dead, zookeepers Jan and Antonina Żabiński began smuggling Jews into empty cages. Another dozen "guests" hid inside the Żabińskis' villa, emerging after dark for dinner, socializing, and, during rare moments of calm, piano concerts. Jan, active in the Polish resistance, kept ammunition buried in the elephant enclosure and stashed explosives in the animal hospital. Meanwhile, Antonina kept her unusual household afloat, caring for both its human and its animal inhabitants--otters, a badger, hyena pups, lynxes--and keeping alive an atmosphere of play and innocence even as Europe crumbled around her.

Monday February 5, 7PM – Susan O'Morchoe
Monday February 19, 6PM – Potesta's

March 2018

My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry by Fredrik Backman (fiction, 372 pages)

Elsa is seven years old and different. Her grandmother is seventy-seven years old and crazy—as in standing-on-the-balcony-firing-paintball-guns-at-strangers crazy. She is also Elsa's best, and only, friend. At night Elsa takes refuge in her grandmother's stories, in the Land-of-Almost-Awake and the Kingdom of Miamas, where everybody is different and nobody needs to be normal. When Elsa's grandmother dies and leaves behind a series of letters apologizing to people she has wronged, Elsa's greatest adventure begins. Her grandmother's instructions lead her to an apartment building full of drunks, monsters, attack dogs, and old crones but also to the truth about fairy tales and kingdoms and a grandmother like no other.

Monday March 5, 7PM – Cindy Hibbard
Monday March 19, 6PM – Potesta's

April 2018

The Lovers: Afghanistan's Romeo and Juliet by Rod Nordland (nonfiction, 389 pages)

Zakia and Ali grew up as neighbors and fell in love from afar. Defying their families and Afghan custom, the young lovers—both from different Muslim sects—eloped and went into hiding. When Rod Nordland came upon them, he felt obligated, having shared their story in the pages of the New York Times, to help them to safety—but there was a limit to how well he could protect them. Despite more than a decade of American good intentions, women in Afghanistan are still subjected to some of the worst human rights violations in the world. Rod Nordland tells a compelling tale of forbidden love, governmental bungling, and reckless disregard for basic human rights, and illustrates the degree to which mysogyny persists in traditional Afghan culture. *The Lovers* is a story of one couple's unshakable self-determination and the irrepressibility of human feeling in the face of a shockingly repressive society.

Monday April 9, 7PM – Elizabeth Danos
Monday April 16, 6PM – Potesta's

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May 2018

Spring Potluck - Church

June 2018

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead

(fiction, 322 pages)

Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. Life is hell for all the slaves, but especially bad for Cora; an outcast even among her fellow Africans, she is coming into womanhood—where even greater pain awaits. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape. Matters do not go as planned—Cora kills a young white boy who tries to capture her. Though they manage to find a station and head north, they are being hunted. In Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor—engineers and conductors operate a secret network of tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora and Caesar's first stop is South Carolina, in a city that initially seems like a haven. But the city's placid surface masks an insidious scheme designed for its black denizens. And even worse: Ridgeway, the relentless slave catcher, is close on their heels. Forced to flee again, Cora embarks on a harrowing flight, state by state, seeking true freedom. Like the protagonist of *Gulliver's Travels*, Cora encounters different worlds at each stage of her journey—hers is an odyssey through time as well as space. As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the unique terrors for black people in the pre-Civil War era, his narrative seamlessly weaves the saga of America from the brutal importation of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of the present day.

NOTE: This book won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.

Monday June 4, 7PM – Cheri Johnson

Monday June 18, 6PM – Potesta's