

OAS Required Skill Module: Reading and Critiquing a Popular Book on Academia

While you may not think of it this way, you currently reside in the world of academe. It is here that you are putting in the time to achieve a life goal, escaping adulthood for a few years, or perhaps even trying to shape yourself intellectually. Whatever the reason, you should at least try to understand a bit more about this place you call home.

Now if you scratch a little under the veneer of the classroom or the office hour, you will find out professors, and intellectuals in general, are a lot more interesting than you might think. Sure we seem boring and stiff—decidedly not the folks with whom you would want to chill—but actually we are great fun in our own way. We just tend to get all wrangled up in frolics, foibles and follies that might not occur to the average person. (I can't believe I just wrote that sentence.)

Perhaps the best way to get started on what goes on in the heads of professors and academicians is to read about them in the popular books where they have starring roles. So listed below are a collection of recommended books to begin this exploration. You are required to read at least one of these books at some point during the semester. You will then write a 250 and 500 word critique of the book—about the length of a pompous Amazon.com review. Make sure you include the following information with your submission, as a pdf file, to your UGTA and Blackboard.

What to include in this skill module product.

1. Book name and author
2. Your name and utetid
3. Your UGTA
4. a reasonably organized 250 to 500 word review

A piece of advice. Please buy a book now and carry it around with you for all those hours in your life that you are waiting for something to happen. Like that first trip back home to see your family when you realize your high school friends are really lame and you'd rather just lie on the couch reading a book.

The book list (choose one.)

- R. Feynman--Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman! (Adventures of a Curious Character)
- G. H. Hardy--A Mathematician's Apology
- A.S. Byatt--Possession: A Romance
- L. Truss--Eats, Shoots & Leaves: A Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation
- D. Lodge--Small World
- S. Winchester--The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary