English 1A **Book Club Project** Spring 2012

**Overview:** The book club project is designed to provide a number of benefits: to get you comfortable with reading longer writings than the essays in the text, to let you see how the personal voice, interview essays, and writing about culture look in the “real world,” to give you insights into lives very different from your own, and/or to give you deeper insights into your own life by learning about those who are one step ahead of you on their life paths.

**Details:** (for even more details, see the course web site).

**The Books** The books you will choose among are all told in the first person, giving you the writer’s point of view directly; they all involve writing about culture, usually describing a group that the writer doesn’t belong to but has occasion to observe closely; most of them have some connection to the idea of education, whether formal schooling or a more informal kind; most were chosen not only for the inherent interest of the story they tell but also because they are very well written, and thus are good models for your own writing. If you want to pitch a different book, it needs to meet these requirements, too.

**The Assignments** I might add some small ones as we go along, but here are the ones you will definitely do.

1) Topic Proposal for Book Clubs: This will be a brief statement of who will be in your group (at least 3 people but no more than 5). If you want to pitch an alternative book that fits the criteria listed above under “The Books,” that pitch (1 paragraph + a copy of the book) will be due the class period before that day (2/22). You will need to persuade at least 2 other people to join your group. **Due M 2/27**

2) Progress Report: This assignment is described further in its own assignment called “Book Club Progress Reports, Halfway Mark.” You can also report any problems or questions that have come up. **Due M 4/2**

3) Office Conference The groups will meet with me (one group at a time) in my office to discuss your in-class presentations. You will turn in the outline for your talk, detailing who will cover what topics and what visuals you will use. **Due M 4/16**

4) Presentations These will be fairly short, approximately 10 minutes for each group. This is detailed in its own assignment sheet, called “Book Club Presentation: Details”

**Due : 4/25, 4/30, 5/2 if needed**

5) Book Club Response Essay: This is a new assignment, and I will describe it in more detail after you all choose your books. It will be fairly lengthy (1200 words) and based on the subject of your book. These will be written individually. **Due: M 5/14**

**The Choices:** I am open to suggestions of other titles, but here are the ones I am recommending. The ones above the line have already been used successfully in previous classes. Most of these books are available for you to check out of the library and look at before you make your choice. All are available in paperback versions for you to buy. It will be your responsibility to get your own copy of the book.

The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream

By Drs. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt

Lost in the Meritocracy: The Undereducation of an Overachiever by Walter Kirn

The Film Club by David Gilmour

Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother by Amy Chua

Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs [Most] Americans Won’t Do

by Gabriel Thompson

Outcasts United: A Refugee Team, An American Town by Warren St. John

Richistan: A Journey Through the American Wealth Boom and the Lives of the New Rich by Robert Frank (written in 2007)

The Translator: A Tribesman’s Memoir of Darfur By Daoud Hari

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**Books I haven’t tried but that might work:**

The Butterfly Mosque by G. Willow Wilson

Leaving Microsoft to Change the World: An Entrepreneur's Odyssey to Educate the World's Children by John Wood

Kabul Beauty School: An American Woman Goes Behind the Veil

by Deborah Rodriguez

Mexican Enough: My Life Between the Borderlines by Stephanie Elizondo Griest

Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets By Sudhir Venkatesh

Body of Work: Meditations on Mortality from the Human Anatomy LabBy Christine Montross

Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance By Atul Gawande