

**POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
STAFF SUMMER READS**

PIR STAFF MEMBER	RECOMMENDED READ	WHY YOU SHOULD READ IT
Andy Hom	<i>Imperial Life in the Emerald City</i> (Rajiv Chandrashekeran)	You've grown up in the era of Forever War, and you've every right to be mad as hell!
	<i>The Looming Tower</i> (Lawrence Wright)	Al Qaeda as farce, then tragedy
	<i>Command and Control</i> (Eric Schlosser)	Nuclear disasters and near misses, for another year at 2 minutes to midnight
Ben Rosamond	<i>Disaster Nationalism: The Downfall of Liberal Civilisation</i> (Richard Seymour)	A macroscopic and highly readable overview of the state of world politics that thinks through the causes and implications of the rise of the new authoritarian right.
Claire Duncanson	<i>Twelve Feminist Lessons of War</i> (Cynthia Enloe)	Cynthia Enloe's latest book is a fantastic introduction to feminist approaches to global politics, something you'll have the opportunity to study in depth here at the University of Edinburgh. In her trademark engaging style, Cynthia Enloe reveals how the social and political dynamics that shape war—from military recruitment and economic collapse to sexual assault—are deeply gendered. She explores how patriarchy and militarism have become deeply embedded into our institutions, to the cost of all of us, and the planet. As the publishers put it, " <i>Twelve Feminist Lessons of War</i> is the gritty and grounded book we need to understand what is happening to our world."
	<i>How Women Can Save the Planet</i> (Anne Karpf)	Despite its terrible title, this is a fabulous read, that is less about what women can and should do about the climate crisis, but rather focused on <i>how the crisis is gendered</i> in its consequences <i>and its causes</i> . There are opportunities to explore the intersection of ecological crises, feminism and global politics throughout your degree, and this book is a great starting point.
Cristian Vaccari	<i>Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World</i> (Cal Newport)	This book is essential reading if you want to understand how to protect your ability to concentrate, learn, and produce high-quality creative work in a world full of distractions.
	<i>The Wizard of the Kremlin</i> (Giuliano da Empoli)	An accessible and engaging narrative on Vladimir Putin's rise to and maintenance of power in contemporary Russia.
	<i>Look Who's Back</i> (Timur Vermes)	A surreal and revealing novel that imagines Adolf Hitler return to contemporary German politics.

	<i>House of Cards</i> (Michael Dobbs)	A classic political thriller that takes you behind the scenes of British political life and inspired the popular TV series.
Davide Vampa	<i>Seeing</i> (Jose Saramago)	A novel about political apathy and disillusionment and withdrawal of political elites (basically a novel version of Peter Mair's cartel party theory)
	<i>The Leopard</i> (Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa)	About the ambiguity of political change, it presents the Italian 19 th century Risorgimento not as a noble popular uprising but as a superficial change that leaves power structures in Sicily largely intact
	<i>Rodham</i> (Curtis Sittenfeld)	A speculative novel imagining Hillary Clinton's life had she not married Bill Clinton. Reflection on gender, power, ambition, and how personal choices can shape political trajectories
Elizabeth Bomberg	<i>The Ministry for Future</i> (Kim Stanley Robinson)	A cracker of a novel – thoughtful, suspenseful and engaging. Robinson provides a chilling, much-too-real, but also hopeful account of climate change and its impact on politics, society, relationships and the earth.
Elizabeth Cripps	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> (John Steinbeck)	Perhaps <i>the</i> original climate novel, except it was written years before anyone talked about climate change
	<i>The Constant Gardener</i> (John Le Carre)	A gripping thriller (I defy you to put it down!) which raises disturbing questions about where power lies, who decides what we get to know, and the price paid by activists
	<i>Merchants of Doubt</i> (Naomi Oreskes & Erik Conway)	A terrifying (non-fiction) exposé of the climate denial industry – and its predecessors
Fraser McMillan	<i>Abundance</i> (Ezra Klein & Derek Thompson)	An engaging commentary on the ways progressive American politicians and voters get in the way of their own goals, favouring process and "everything bagel-ism" over delivery of housing, transport, innovation and clean energy. The authors appeal to readers to move away from perfectionism and scarcity politics to focus on what actually works. Although written about the United States, it contains valuable lessons for Scotland, Britain and the rest of Europe as we grapple with rising costs of living, ageing populations and a stuttering energy transition.
	<i>Fifth Sun: A New History of the Aztecs</i> (Camilla Townsend)	This is as much a political history as a cultural or sociological one. From the heights of the Triple Alliance to Tenochtitlan's transformation into Mexico City in the decades following the Conquistadores' arrival, Townsend evokes the sights, sounds (and smells) of every important juncture in the rise and fall of the Aztec Empire. A work of both scholarly precision and vivid, novelesque storytelling, readers will come away understanding that Moctezuma's city state collapsed as

		much due to domestic politics as the rifles and horses representing the Spanish Crown.
	<i>Perfection</i> (Vincenzo Latronico)	An incredible piece of sociological fiction. <i>Perfection</i> quietly lacerates the lifestyle choices, aesthetic preferences and political hypocrisies of its Millennial protagonists, freezing the id of the Erasmus Generation in amber. A short, subtly hilarious novel which feels - at least to thirtysomething white-collar professionals - like staring into a mirror and hating everything you see.
Harshan Kumarasingham	<i>Beyond a Boundary</i> (C.L.R. James)	As it's summer, what better way to spend your time than by playing, watching or reading about Cricket! However, this work by the Trinidadian intellectual and political activist is much more than about cricket or sport. Instead, it dives into strong themes of race, politics, colonialism, prejudice, culture and education using cricket as its prism. It remains justifiably a classic.
Hemangini Gupta	<i>The Psychic Lives of Statues: Reckoning with the Rubble of Empire</i> (Rahul Rao)	A little book but such a good one, offering a deep dive into current movements for decolonization (more complicated than you think!) and liberation, student activism, and the entangled lives of race and caste that shape how we think of place and belonging.
Julia Calvert	<i>The Company</i> (Stephen R. Bown)	An engaging discussion of the foundations of the Hudson's Bay Company and its expansion through (what is now) the Canadian state. It's a great book for understanding the role that private companies played in empire, state building, and colonialism.
	<i>A Splendid Exchange: How Trade Shaped the World</i> (William Bernstein)	A history of world trade from its prehistoric origins to the modern international trade regime. It's a great way to understand how the trade regime was formed and how it shaped global commerce (and was shaped by it).
	<i>Butler to the World: How Britain Became the Servant of Tycoons, Tax Dodgers, Kleptocrats and Criminals</i> (Oliver Bullough)	A critical take on Britain's position as a centre of global finance post-empire.
Kasia Kaczmarek	<i>Academic Freedom in a Plural World: Global Critical Perspectives</i> (ed. Frédéric Mégret & Nandini Ramanujam)	Available for free download here: https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/97078
Larissa Peixoto Vale Gomes	<i>And Still the Earth</i> (Ignácio de Loyola Brandão)	Dystopias aren't very common in Brazilian literature. Ignácio de Loyola Brandão wrote this as part of a trilogy, during the military dictatorship, but was censored by the regime. It is a novel of the absurd combined

		with a climate apocalypse, where trees exist in museums and people have abandoned their cars in the Great Traffic Jam.
	<i>Among Wolves: Ethnography and the Immersive Study of Power</i> (Timothy Pachirat)	Among Wolves is a good introduction to the concepts, disciplines, and even some of the names you'll be introduced to in the coming years. It is not necessarily the best literature, but it is a fun and easy way to know more about what you're getting yourself into as well as seeing it from a different angle. It doesn't have to be all musty long books or dozens of journal papers with endless charts.
	<i>Kallocain</i> (Karin Boyd)	Sweden was neutral during the Second World War, but this had consequences. The secret police and propaganda apparatus reminded the population that their neutral status depended on silence, to avoid being intercepted by undercover agents. <i>Kallocain</i> is a dystopia that explores this wound in Swedish society, revolving around a <i>truth drug</i> in a totalitarian superstate. I like this because women can write dystopias too and the anxiety of the main character is quite overwhelming. This was written pre-1984, demonstrating that these fears were around much earlier and in various places in the world, even the so-called neutral states. Is there such a thing as neutrality? What are the consequences of war away from the actual fight? What types of relationships can we envision for ourselves?
	<i>Child of the Dark</i> (Caroline Maria de Jesus)	Child of the Dark's literal translation would be "Dump Room: Diaries of a Woman from the Favela". Carolina Maria de Jesus was born in 1914, the granddaughter of enslaved people in Brasil, attending school for only a few years. As an adult, she lived in the Favela do Canindé, in the city of São Paulo, and worked as a litter picker. De Jesus read the books she picked from the rubbish and wrote in leftover notebook pages. She was discovered by a journalist, who saw her writing one day and got her published in 1960. Both the book and her life story are important – the abolition of slavery in Brasil didn't change material conditions for black and brown people. Scars and wounds exist until today. This book is one literary piece of evidence.
	Borgen (TV series; 2010-2013; 2022)	Danish TV series that shows the intricate political life of a prime minister, including the gendered aspects that come with that.
Leah McCabe	<i>Handmaid's Tale</i> (Margaret Atwood)	A classic feminist novel and must read (the TV series is also great). Atwood's also written a sequel called <i>The Testaments</i> , which is being

		made into a TV show. I highly recommend all of Atwood's works (the MaddAddam trilogy is a personal favourite).
	<i>A Woman Like Me: A Memoir</i> (Diane Abbott)	A candid memoir from Diane Abbott, the first elected Black woman MP in the UK and the current Mother of the House. Abbott provides fascinating insights into life as a child of the Windrush generation and navigating British politics as a working-class woman of colour.
	<i>Swimming in the Dark</i> (Tomasz Jedrowski)	A beautifully written novel set during the fall of communism in Poland. It's a story of first love between two young men who struggle to stay connected as they find themselves on opposite sides of the political divide.
Luke March	<i>All the President's Men</i> (Mikhail Zygar)	It's a light-hearted and witty interrogation of some of the main movers and shakers in Vladimir Putin's Kremlin, from the perspective of a Moscow insider. It's not necessarily the deepest account, but it is one of the few that uses interview sources to scratch beneath the surface and bust a few of the myths pervading Russia (not least that the Russian authorities are all-seeing and all-knowing).
Marc Geddes	<i>How Westminster Works...And Why It Doesn't</i> (Ian Dunt)	An excellent overview into understanding the British political system and especially on its shortcomings. It is well-written, accessible and very well-informed.
Meryl Kenny	<i>Unshrinking</i> (Kate Manne)	Manne traces how fatness is constructed as a moral issue, argues that 'fatphobia' operates as a system of oppression rooted in sexism, racism and classism, and evaluates the impacts of anti-fat bias and weight loss culture. A thought-provoking read for the Ozempic age.
	<i>Lobster: And Other Things I'm Learning to Love</i> (Hollie McNish)	One of my favourite poets, this volume is a mix of poetry, prose and memoir that covers everything from the politics of the body, to the cost-of-living crisis, to friendship and parenthood. It confronts the things society teaches us to hate, and asks if we might learn to love them again. Funny, poignant, unpretentious.
Mathias Thaler	<i>The Director</i> (Daniel Kehlmann)	A great fictional meditation on complicity with authoritarianism and fascism.
Mihaela Mihai	<i>The Feast of the Goat</i> (Mario Vargas Llosa)	A thriller that offers a multi-perspectival view on political dictatorship and the costs of resisting it
	<i>The Vegetarian</i> (Han Kang)	On violence and conformity to/refusal of oppressive social norms
Nida Alahmad	<i>A Stranger in Your Own City: Travels in the Middle East's Long War</i> (Ghaith Abdul Ahad)	The author is a Baghdadi architect who becomes a journalist as a result of an accident during the 2003 US-led invasion. The book chronicles his travels across the country over the span of almost 20

		years. It offers insights into the emergence of sectarianism, civil war, and proliferation of Islamist groups not only in Iraq but also across its borders. It also gives a sensitive account of the daily lives of regular people from different walks of life.
	<i>Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982</i> (Mahmoud Darwish)	Written in Beirut while under Israeli siege in 1982, Darwish wrote this prose poems to reflect on memory, exile, history, and the role of the writer in war time. A beautifully written documentation of a critical historical episode by one of the most influential figures in modern Arabic poetry.
Nicola Perugini	<i>Footnotes in Gaza</i> (Joe Sacco)	A journalistic graphic novel about two bloody incidents during the 1956 Suez Crisis.
	<i>Enter Ghost</i> (Isabella Hammad)	A novel about exile, return, and the politics of art in the context of Israel's occupation of Palestine
Oliver Escobar	<i>Policy Paradox</i> (Deborah Stone)	A book that demystifies politics & policy and gives you tools to think with. It's beautifully written and a classic! It brought me back to political science.
	<i>Avoiding Politics</i> (Nina Eliasoph)	A masterpiece study of everyday political life. When I grow up, I want to write like Nina.
Patrick Theiner	<i>Co-Intelligence: Living and Working with AI</i> (Ethan Mollick)	A great primer that steers clear of the hype and shows the practical implications of AI. Written by perhaps the most up-to-date academic voice on the topic.
	<i>The Truth</i> (Terry Pratchett)	A hapless journalist accidentally invents newspapers just in time to discover that powerful elites are using fake news and manufactured scandals to overthrow the government. No idea why this book comes to mind at the moment.
	<i>The Age of Surveillance Capitalism</i> (Shoshana Zuboff)	Could be the single best book to understand why both technology and the economy seem so broken.
Tom O'Shea	<i>The Prophet</i> (Isaac Deutscher)	Gripping biography of the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky — often said to be the book that first got Tony Blair interested in politics.
	<i>The Right to Sex</i> (Amia Srinivasan)	Highly readable essays on the politics of sex and sexuality by a leading contemporary feminist philosopher.
	<i>The World Turned Upside Down</i> (Christopher Hill)	A captivating introduction to the radical political thinkers of the English revolution of the seventeenth century — from the Diggers and the Ranters to the Seekers and the Levellers.
Regan Burles	<i>The Secret History</i> (Donna Tartt)	Recently TikTok famous, this masterful campus novel combines literary flair with fast-paced mystery. Perfect for summer holiday

	<i>The Vocation Lectures</i> (Max Weber)	Now over a century old, these lectures provide startlingly prescient lessons on the psychic and social dilemmas you might face if you pursue a life in politics or academia.
Sarah Childs	<i>Fireweather</i> (John Valliant)	About the burning down of Fort McMurray in Canada
	<i>Killing Thatcher</i> (Rory Carroll)	The inside story of the 1984 Brighton bombing, its victims, and its consequences
	<i>Necessary Women: The Untold Story of Parliament's Working Women</i> (Mari Takayanagi and Elizabeth Hallem Smith)	Book that draws on research from the Parliamentary Archives to chart the untold histories of working women within (and beyond) the Palace of Westminster
Sara Rich Dorman	'A "cat-dog" called electoral autocracy' (Adrián del Río)	Available to read here: https://theloop.ecpr.eu/a-cat-dog-called-electoral-autocracy/
	'State of the world 2024: 25 years of autocratization – democracy trumped?', <i>Democratization</i> (Nord et al.)	An article that provides a 'state of the world' - available to read here: https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2025.2487825