PRITZKER READS!

Medicine-Related

Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present by Harriet A. Washington – An absolutely comprehensive account of that unmasks the deeply complex roots of systems, practices, and institutions behind African-American health deficits and disparity in the United States of America. A book that will shed light on so much history. It is tough to read in one sitting – a lot of emotionally difficult information to process. Take breaks if you need to. It is masterfully written and is an excellent source for discussion and engagement.

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures by Anne Fadiman – This literary masterpiece explores the clash between a small county hospital in California and a refugee family from Laos over the care of Lia Lee, a Hmong child diagnosed with severe epilepsy. It makes us question and investigate what is really meant by “cultural competency,” and even challenges the limitations in the understanding of that term and what that means for engagement with patients as future doctors.

When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi – This is the memoir of Paul Kalanithi, who was diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer in the final years of his neurosurgery training. His reflections on learning to become a doctor and then learning to become a patient are stunning.
Complications: A Surgeon’s Notes on an Imperfect Science by Atul Gawande -
In gripping accounts of true cases, surgeon Atul Gawande explores the power and the limits of medicine, offering an unflinching view from the scalpel's edge. Complications lays bare a science not in its idealized form but as it actually is—uncertain, perplexing, and profoundly human.

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot – The story of Henrietta Lacks is vastly important. While her cells became one of the most important tools in medicine, they were taken without her consent. Henrietta’s cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can’t afford health insurance. It’s a story inextricably connected to the dark history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we’re made of.

Cutting For Stone by Abraham Verghese – Medical fiction! Marion and Shiva Stone are twin brothers. Orphaned by their mother’s death and their father’s disappearance, bound together by a preternatural connection and a shared fascination with medicine, the twins come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution. Moving from Addis Ababa to New York City and back again, Cutting for Stone is an unforgettable story of love and betrayal, medicine and ordinary miracles—and two brothers whose fates are forever intertwined.

Body of Work: Meditations on Mortality from the Human Anatomy Lab by Christine Montross – Written by a woman who is now a psychiatrist, this book is a reflection on her time as a first-year medical student and the unique experience that is anatomy lab. A great preparation for your anatomy experience, especially if you are feeling nervous about the emotional impact it may have on you.
The Devil in the White City by Erik Larson - This bestselling true story weaves together the stories of Daniel H. Burnham, the architect who oversees construction of the 1893 Worlds Fair (held on the Midway in Hyde Park) and H.H. Holmes, the serial killer using the fair to entrap his victims.

There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America by Alex Kotlowitz - This is the moving and powerful account of two remarkable boys struggling to survive in Chicago’s Henry Horner Homes, a public housing complex disfigured by crime and neglect.

The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation by Natalie Moore - Chicago-native Natalie Moore shines a light on contemporary segregation on the South Side of Chicago through reported essays, showing the life of these communities through the stories of people who live in them. The South Side shows the important impact of Chicago’s historic segregation - and the ongoing policies that keep it that way.

Black Boy by Richard Wright – “Set in the South and later on, Chicago, Black Boy is an autobiography that delves into the black experience in the Jim Crow era.”
FICTION AND POETRY

Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi – follows the parallel paths of these sisters and their descendants through eight generations: from the Gold Coast to the plantations of Mississippi, from the American Civil War to Jazz Age Harlem. Yaa Gyasi’s extraordinary novel illuminates slavery’s troubled legacy both for those who were taken and those who stayed—and shows how the memory of captivity has been inscribed on the soul of our nation.

Dark Matter by Blake Crouch – Set briefly in the real Chicago and then extensively in a lot of Chicagos in parallel universes. A man feeling regret over choosing his family over his career ends up in a parallel universe where he chose his career. Unsurprisingly, he quickly realizes he should have been careful what he wished for, and tries desperately to get back to his real life. Buckle up for some twists.

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros – Told in a series of vignettes—sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous—it is the story of a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago, inventing for herself who and what she will become.

Electric Arches by Eve Ewing – Written by a professor at U of C! Electric Arches is an imaginative exploration of black girlhood and womanhood through poetry, visual art, and narrative prose. Blending stark realism with the fantastical, Ewing takes us from the streets of Chicago to an alien arrival in an unspecified future, deftly navigating boundaries of space, time, and reality with delight and flexibility.