

The 20th Century's Twenty Most Important Works of Non-Fiction

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As with the MIBYs, “most important” doesn’t mean “most significant” or “most influential”. It simply means: The most important books for cultivating erudition.

Classics like Wittgenstein’s “Tractatus”, Quine’s “From A Logical Point of View”, Adorno’s “The Culture Industry”, Polyani’s “The Great Transformation”, Schumpeter’s “Capitalism, Socialism, & Democracy”, Parfit’s “Reasons & Persons”, Arendt’s “The Origins of Totalitarianism”, Marcuse’s “One Dimensional Man”, Becker’s “The Birth & Death of Meaning”, Said’s “Orientalism”, Postmann’s “Amusing Ourselves To Death”, Hoffman’s “The True Believer”, Halberstam’s “The Best & The Brightest”, King’s “Why We Can’t Wait”, Arrow’s “Social Choice & Individual Values”, Sen’s “Development As Freedom”, and Bloom’s “The Invention of the Human” almost made the cut. However I figured that a “Top 40” list may be a bit much for people looking for a limited syllabus.

The following list may be treated as “Books To Read Before You Die” for those seeking edification.

The 20 Most Important Non-Fiction Books Of The 20th Century:

(listed in order of publication)

Economy & Society –Max Weber

The General Theory of Employment, Interest, & Money –J. Maynard Keynes

The Power Elite –C. Wright Mills

The Affluent Society –John Kenneth Galbraith

The Logic Of Scientific Discovery –Karl Popper

The Structure of Scientific Revolutions –Thomas Kuhn

Anti-Intellectualism In American Life –Richard Hofstadter

For Reasons of State –Noam Chomsky

The Denial of Death –Ernest Becker

A Theory of Justice –John Rawls

Sociobiology –E.O. Wilson

The Selfish Gene –Richard Dawkins

The Gnostic Gospels –Elain Pagels

Godel, Escher, Bach –Douglas Hofstadter

Ethics Without God –Kai Nielson

Consciousness Explained –Daniel C. Dennett

The Sources of Social Power –Michael Mann

Deterring Democracy –Noam Chomsky

The Origins of Order –Stuart Kauffman

Darwin's Dangerous Idea –Daniel C. Dennett