

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

January 16, 2012 Category: Miscellaneous  
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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”, Parfid’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 20<sup>th</sup> 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