

Journalism & Publishing

A Brief History of Artificial Intelligence: What It Is, Where We Are, and Where We Are Going.

By Michael Wooldridge.

Jan. 2021. 272p. illus. Flatiron, \$27.99 (9781250770745). 006.3.

Computer science professor Wooldridge (*An Introduction to MultiAgent Systems*, 2011), an expert on artificial intelligence (AI), covers the history of AI and the important facets of the field. When we think of AI, we think of driverless cars or robot helpers. According to Wooldridge, there are many exciting possibilities with AI, but also misconceptions about it. He explores the development of technical terms and algorithmic concepts in AI and highlights the ideas, projects, and people involved in the field. Drawing on his own research experiences, he shares his thoughts on AI's impact in areas such as health care and transportation. Geared toward general readers, Wooldridge's writing is accessible. The content can be demanding, though, as he often presents complex analogies and systems of thinking in AI. Readers interested in AI, semantics, and the history of technologies will find this book fascinating and engaging in its examination of the impact and development of AI in our society and lives today. —Raymond Pun

The Data Detective: Ten Easy Rules to Make Sense of Statistics.

By Tim Harford.

Feb. 2021. 336p. Riverhead, \$28 (9780593084595). 001.4.

Harford, author, columnist for the *Financial Times*, and BBC broadcaster, releases his tenth book at an opportune moment. We're all facing endless stats about COVID-19, while also wading through information in a particularly divisive political climate. How can we make use of all this data? Conquering the intimidating world of statistics is a daunting task, but Harford has a knack for making complex subjects accessible. On the surface, this is about making use of statistics, but at its core, Harford's book is focused on encouraging readers to maintain a sense of curiosity about information and data. He presents ten rules, which he expertly weaves into historical contexts to explain the importance of each tenet. These rules will not trigger flashbacks to math class or economics 101, instead they have to do with intuition and asking the right questions. *The Data Detective* is sure to be another success from Harford, and is a powerful tool, especially in the current climate, one that will give readers the confidence to delve into data and statistics in a new and meaningful way. —Patricia Smith

You Don't Belong Here: How Three Women Rewrote the Story of War.

By Elizabeth Becker.

Feb. 2021. 320p. PublicAffairs, \$28 (9781541768208). 070.4.

The Vietnam War, ancient history to some, is still being examined. Discussions of colonialism, methods of warfare, racism, cruelty, and politics only scratch the surface of the complications. Journalism as a profession and as a way to illuminate events rose to a new level of importance during those tumultuous years. Becker presents three extraordinary women journalists who risked all to tell the story, for, along with all the other issues of the era, sexism is part of that story. Australian Kate Webb, Frenchwoman Catherine Leroy, and American Frances FitzGerald, took themselves to the war front, without jobs or authorization to start with, to tell the story from their unique perspectives. At this time, women were considered too physically and emotionally fragile to face the horrors of a conflict such as this, but face it they did. Becker, a former Vietnam War correspondent herself, writes about these women's lives, but the stink and horror of the war is present on every page. Whether as a woman's story or a war story, this should find a wide audience. —Danise Hoover

Philosophy & Psychology

Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual.

By Luvvie Ajayi Jones.

Mar. 2021. 304p. Penguin, \$26 (9781984881908). 158.

Comedian and activist Ajayi Jones (*I'm Judging You*, 2016) devotes each chapter of her second book to a commonly held fear, mining comedy, her Nigerian ancestry, and her own experience to help readers Be, Say, and Do anyway. The book's tone mirrors a long lunch with a trusted friend; all-caps, wise-up pronouncements mix with *f*-bombs, professionalism, and clarity. Manage fear, Ajayi Jones argues, and be awesome. Many of Ajayi Jones' scenarios are drawn from life's upper echelons, and some of life's most intense fear-makers are absent. Even with that, the love Ajayi Jones feels for her grandmother Olufunmilayo Juliana Faloyin shines through the text, and readers will bask in the joy of following this woman's footsteps. Ajayi Jones is also willing to offer up her own mistakes, like a D in chemistry and an uncaring Twitter post that sparked a troll pile-on. Devoted readers of the be-your-best-self genre may not find novel advice in these pages (act even if you are scared, speak truth even if your voice shakes), but Ajayi Jones' engaged personality and storytelling style are a meaningful refresh. —Emily Dziuban

Useful Delusions: The Power and Paradox of the Self-Deceiving Brain.

By Shankar Vedantam and Bill Mesler.

Mar. 2021. 264p. Norton, \$27.95 (9780393652208). 153.4.

We all lie to ourselves. Turns out, that's not necessarily a bad thing or even a character flaw. This curious book inquires, "When should we fight self-deception and when—and how much—should we embrace it?" Deluding ourselves and promoting false optimism can generate beneficial outcomes, posits author, public radio host, and podcaster Vedantam (*Hidden Brain*, 2010) and coauthor Mesler. In a gloomy reality, fooling ourselves into believing something positive can heighten well-being by offering hope and optimism. A self-deceiving brain has a possible evolutionary role in enhancing survival. Although honesty ranks high as a valued virtue, deceptions are ubiquitous. We lie out of kindness to protect or comfort others. Lies assist in steering our social relationships. Lies function as a defense mechanism. The best part of this inquiry is the final third, a probe of the pervasiveness of self-deception in rituals, patriotism, and religion. The authors conclude that we are all vulnerable to falsehoods and myths not because we are simpletons, but rather because we are flawed and frightened beings. Welcoming our inner Pinocchio may just be prudent behavior. —Tony Miksanek

Wait: A Love Letter to Those in Despair.

By Cuong Lu.

Feb. 2021. 160p. Shambhala, paper, \$16.95 (9781611808803). 155.9.

Readers feeling as though empathy is lacking in our society should look no further than this book from Buddhist scholar Lu (*The Buddha in Jail*, 2019). Lu fled Vietnam with his family in the 1970s and witnessed a shooting as a child: he is no stranger to trauma or pain. Writing with authenticity, and without trite words or catchphrases, he explains how he was able to cope with trauma and become who he is today. He offers much sound advice. Allow yourself to feel all emotions; suffering is necessary to appreciate happy times. Rather than avoiding adversity, develop coping methods to become a stronger person. Only when you love yourself, flaws and all, can you truly be at peace. Lu offers realistic ways to combat emotional pain and anger, and does not shy from suggesting societal causes of these feelings. Despite the bleakness one may feel today, it's impossible not to feel some optimism

YA Recommendations

- Adult titles recommended for teens are marked with the following symbols: **YA**, for books of general YA interest; **YA/C**, for books with particular curriculum value; **YA/S**, for books that will appeal most to teens with a special interest in a specific subject; and **YA/M**, for books best suited to mature teens.



Kick off 2021 with this list of forthcoming memoirs and biographies of fascinating folks and fiction follow-ups that will have, as the title suggests, high demand.

—Susan Maguire

Chasing History: *A Kid in the Newsroom.* By Carl Bernstein. Holt, \$28.99 (9781627791502). May.

Consummate newsman Bernstein recalls his early years as a high-school reporter for the *Washington Star* in the early 1960s, where he covered crimes, civil rights, unions, and the John F. Kennedy campaign.

Cosmic Queries: *StarTalk's Guide to Who We Are, How We Got Here, and Where We're Going.* By Neil DeGrasse Tyson and James Trefil. National Geographic, \$30 (9781426221774). Mar.

The work of everybody's fave astrophysicist gets the National Geographic treatment with this sumptuously illustrated companion to Tyson's popular podcast, *StarTalk Radio*.

Every Day Is a Gift. By Tammy Duckworth. Twelve, \$30 (9781538718506). Mar.

Known for her candor, Senator Duckworth chronicles her remarkable life, from escaping war-torn Phnom Penh to the RPG attack that took her legs to becoming the first sitting senator to give birth. (400k print run!)

Good Company. By Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney. Ecco, \$27.99 (9780062876003). May.

D'Aprix Sweeney's highly anticipated follow-up to *The Nest* (2016) follows Flora and Julian, both actors, as a discovery upends everything Flora thought she knew about one fateful summer and about their entire marriage.

Hour of the Witch. By Chris Bohjalian. Doubleday, \$27.95 (9780385542432). Apr.

The latest from perennial book-club favorite Bohjalian (*The Red Lotus*, 2020) is a historical thriller set during the time of the Salem Witch Hunt.

Legacy. By Nora Roberts. St. Martin's, \$28.99 (9781250272935). May.

La Nora returns with another tale of a competent woman falling in love; this time, it's a yoga instructor who is excited to reconnect with her childhood crush, until she starts receiving death threats and people around her start getting killed.

Malibu Rising. By Taylor Jenkins Reid. Ballantine, \$28 (9781524798659). May.

Reid vividly captured the 1970s rock scene in *Daisy Jones & the Six* (2019), so get excited that her latest is set in 1983 Malibu, where four famous siblings throw a party that changes everything overnight.

The Man Who Lived Underground. By Richard Wright. Library of America, \$22.95 (9781598536768). Apr.

This previously unpublished novel by the author of *Native Son* and *Black Boy* follows a Black man who is wrongly accused of a murder and hides out in the sewers of Chicago.

The Marathon Don't Stop: *The Life and Times of Nipsey Hussle.* By Rob Kenner. Atria, \$27 (9781982140298). Mar.

A founding editor of *Vibe* combines a personal and journalistic approach to the life and untimely death of beloved rapper, mogul, and activist Nipsey Hussle.

Somebody's Daughter: *A Memoir.* By Ashley C. Ford. Flatiron, \$27.99 (9781250305978). Jun.

This much-anticipated (as in a 300k print run) first book by writer and podcaster Ford explores how her childhood was shaped by her image of her incarcerated father and how she reckoned with the truth of his crimes as she struggled through adolescence.

after reading this book. Perhaps the most important lesson here is that we are all more connected than we realize. —Carrie Rasak

Religion

Learning to Pray: A Guide for Everyone. By James Martin.

Feb. 2021. 400p. HarperOne, \$27.99 (9780062643230). 200.

Books on prayer abound; why read another? Here, absent theological jargon and proof-texting, with heart-warming prose, Jesuit priest Martin invites readers to consider prayer anew. At its core, prayer, he says, is building a relationship with God in the way that other relationships are built: through conversing, listening, and spending time with one another. Drawing on his own life and the writings of saints and contemporaries, Martin discusses myriad ways to build this relationship: leaning on the reliability of rote prayers, seeking God's presence in centering prayer, immersing in the sacred writings of text-driven *Lectio Divina*, reflecting on God's presence at end-of-day in the Examen, using the imagination in Ignatian contemplation. Prayer is not just about asking and receiving, Martin knows; prayer can, nay must, also express hurt, jealousy, anger, ingratitude, and "dryness" in order to advance into a fuller, more mature relationship with God. Other chapters include information on journaling, retreats, and discerning God's voice. With Martin's guidance, interested readers may see prayer as both the most natural yet transcendent thing in the world. —Joan Carbow

Social Sciences

Anti-Racist Ally: An Introduction to Activism and Action. By Sophie Williams.

Feb. 2021. 176p. Harper, paper, \$16.99 (9780063081352). 305.8.

Williams is a U.K.-based anti-racism activist who focuses on the intersections of race and gender. Her new guide to anti-racism is an introduction to racial justice advocacy. In 14 sections, Williams briefly encapsulates key concepts, such as the difference between personal racism and structural racism and the importance of intersectionality in understanding discrimination. Williams contextualizes the increased interest in allyship within the context of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests that followed the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. She talks through barriers to becoming an ally, including fear of making mistakes or feelings of guilt, and discusses ways to be an ally in the workplace and social communities. Williams is also known for her educational Instagram account @OfficialMillennialBlack, which highlights news and advocacy work. At times, the book's format mirrors the Instagram slideshows she creates to explain concepts with the account. Touching on issues from redlining to