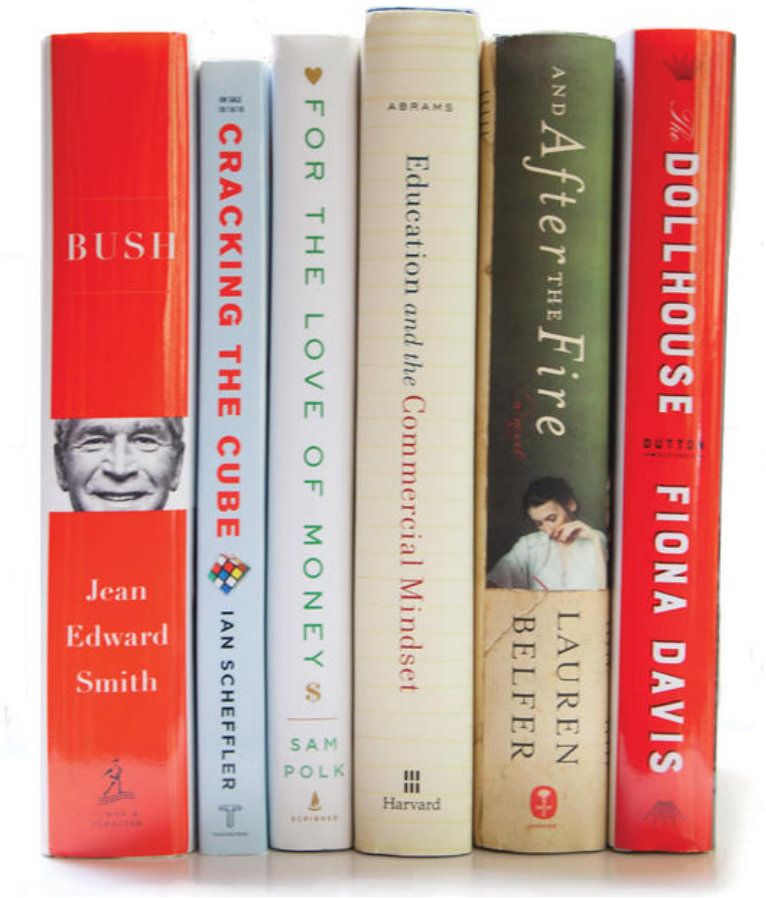
Books

Reading List: Fall 2016

New and noteworthy releases from alumni and faculty.

Fall 2016



The Dollhouse
by Fiona Davis ’00JRN

For the better part of the twentieth century, the Barbizon Hotel for Women was a haven for aspiring Manhattan career girls, including Lauren Bacall, Joan Didion, and Sylvia Plath. It’s an ideal setting for Davis’s juicy debut novel, which toggles between a mysterious death at the hotel in the 1950s and the efforts of a present-day

journalist to uncover the truth.

Bush
by Jean Edward Smith ’64GSAS

There’s a perception that George W. Bush was a puppet president, who left his important foreign-policy decisions to figures like Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. Not so, says presidential biographer Jean Edward Smith (he’s also written about FDR and Grant). In his controversial new tome, Smith paints Bush as faith-driven and hasty and says that he generally acted alone, particularly in his decision to invade Iraq.

Education and the Commercial Mindset
by Samuel E. Abrams ’89CC, ’06TC

The idea of privatizing K–12 education has been gaining traction for the past several decades. In his new book, veteran teacher and school administrator Samuel Abrams offers a thorough critique of for-profit and nonprofit educational alternatives, while also suggesting that public schools look to the business world for some key strategies: offering competitive salaries, giving teachers more autonomy, and employing sampling techniques rather than universal testing to gauge progress.

Cracking the Cube
by Ian Scheffler ’12CC

Journalist Ian Scheffler gets sucked into the frenetic world of the Rubik’s Cube and its “speedcubing” circuit. As he attempts to break into the elite circle of “sub-20” solvers (that’s under twenty *seconds*!), Scheffler also tries to figure out what makes the puzzle so appealing, talking to everyone from children to engineering professors to the notoriously reclusive Ernő Rubik himself.

And After the Fire
by Lauren Belfer ’91SOA

In 1783, a young musician named Sara Itzig Levy gets an unsettling gift from her teacher: an anti-Semitic cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach. Over two centuries later, that manuscript comes to haunt another woman: Susanna Kessler, the niece of an American soldier who took the score from a German mansion after World War II. Sara and Susanna form the backbone of this epic novel, the third from *New York Times* best-selling author Lauren Belfer.

For the Love of Money
by Sam Polk ’01CC

In 2014, Sam Polk wrote an op-ed for the *New York Times* about his decision, several years earlier, to walk away from his job as a Wall Street trader after a $3.6 million bonus made him angry “because it wasn’t big enough.” His deeply personal new memoir continues the story, delving into his “wealth addiction” and how it plunged him into depression and anxiety. Since leaving finance, Polk has founded a nonprofit addressing poverty and obesity, and has married and become a father.



Guide to school abbreviations

All categories >