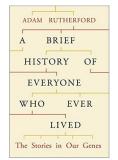
Annual Fellows' Christmas Book and Podcast List 2019



Books



A Brief History of Everyone Who Has Ever Lived: The Stories in our Genes

Adam Rutherford

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Jennie Brand-Miller AM FAA

It's the story of our genes and a layperson's guide to genetics in one go. If you are interested in human evolution, you'll love it.



A Gentleman in Moscow

Amor Towles

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor David Day FAA

A beautifully written and enchanting book, technically historical fiction, but also a romance and a thriller about an aristocrat confined to the Metropol Hotel in Moscow during the Bolshevik revolution. In addition to a fascinating plot, it provides insight into the beginning of the USSR.

ALSO RECOMMENDED BY: Professor lan Frazer AC FAA FRS FTSE

This elegantly written book starts at the time of the Russian revolution, and covers the life of the main character as a prisoner within a Moscow hotel. It makes compulsive reading, setting a series of puzzles for the reader that are gradually resolved over the duration of the story. While the story itself is fiction, it relates the changes in Russia over the main character's lifetime in an entirely plausible and historically accurate narrative.

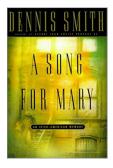


A Man With One of Those Faces

Caimh McDonnell

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor John Evans FAA

Very funny, fast moving fictional story set in Ireland about a man who lives off a tiny inheritance from a relative that was supposed to support him until reaching adulthood. He gets caught up mistakenly with a group that kidnapped a woman and becomes embroiled in police corruption.



A Song for Mary: An Irish-American Memory

Dennis Smith

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Cheryl Praeger AM FAA

A Song for Mary is an evocative memoir of Dennis Smith's childhood in New York. His mother Mary cares for her two sons both physically and emotionally. The book is an honest, and sometimes very funny, story of immigrant life, of a mother's love for her child, and his determination to do his mother proud.

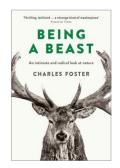


A Sorrow Beyond Dreams (originally Wunschloses Unglück)

Peter Handke

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Oliver Mayo FAA FTSE

Handke's extraordinary memoir of his mother, written after she killed herself at the age of 51. It's just about the most powerful evocation of a mother by a son that I've ever read.

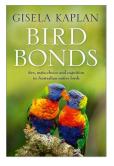


Being a Beast; Adventures Across the Species Divide

Charles Foster

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor John Mattick AO FAA FTSE

A funny and poetic treatise on living in a sett, swimming as an otter and foraging in bins like a city fox—experiencing what being a wild animal is really like.



Bird Bonds: Sex, Mate-Choice and Cognition In Australian Native Birds

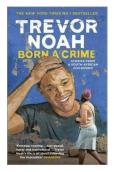
Gisela Kaplan

RECOMMENDED BY: Emeritus Professor Lesley Rogers FAA

Based on a wealth of research Kaplan examines sex differences, mating systems, cognition and bonding in Australian birds. Backed by extensive citation of the scientific literature, the book argues that the most successful, long-lived and cognitively complex Australian species have succeeded by reducing competition between the sexes and by males and females becoming more similar to each other in plumage and song. Illustrations and colour photographs complement this fascinating insight into the world of birds around us.

ALSO RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Simon Gandevia FAA

A beautifully presented and argued book. It plays to the growing evidence for the cognitive capacities of Australian birds and for their crucial driving role in evolution of birds across the globe. You can delve into chapters dealing with individual behaviours or take in the full weight of the arguments. My paperback edition has excellent colour plates. The cover was sufficiently enticing for my cockatiel (Nymphicus hollandicus) to seriously deface its edges! Thoroughly recommended.

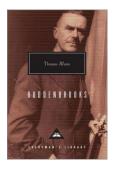


Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood

Trevor Noah

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Frances Separovic AO FAA

Born a Crime is an autobiographical book by the South African comedian, Trevor Noah, about growing up 'coloured' under apartheid. Having a black mother and white father was against the Immorality Act of 1927, hence the title. It's an emotional story about (not) fitting in, strong women and hardship but also witty and extremely funny: I laughed out loud and found it insightful in how humour can help cross and survive political and cultural boundaries.

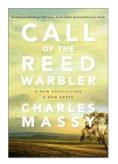


Buddenbrooks

Thomas Mann

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Harry Poulos AM FAA FTSE

I am not an avid reader of long novels, but I found this one quite irresistible. It sets out the history of a well-to-do family in Germany in the 19th century and how critically fortunes depend on the character of succeeding family members. I fully understand why Mann received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1929.

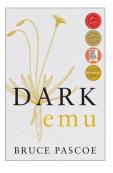


Call of the Reed Warbler: A New Agriculture, A New Earth

Charles Massy

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor John White AO FAA FRS

It is about an alternative to intense industrial agriculture and land degradation. Quite relevant at the moment.

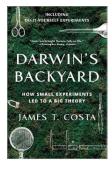


Dark Emu

Bruce Pascoe

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Hans Lambers FAA

Dark Emu puts forward an argument for a reconsideration of the hunter-gatherer tag for precolonial Aboriginal Australians. The evidence insists that Aboriginal people right across the continent were using domesticated plants, sowing, harvesting, irrigating and storing—behaviours inconsistent with the hunter-gatherer tag.

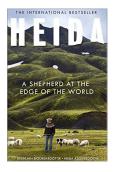


Darwin's Backyard: How Small Experiments Led to a Big Theory

James T. Costa

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Lyn Beazley AO FAA FTSE

This book is a truly engaging journey from Darwin's childhood through to Down House, his bustling home of forty years, where he kept porcupine quills at his desk to dissect barnacles, maintained a flock of sixteen pigeon breeds in the dovecote, and cultivated climbing and carnivorous plants in the study. He was truly the first 'community scientist', engaging naturalists, friends, neighbours, family servants, and even family as assistants in his experiments. It was from the results of these experiments that he plumbed the laws of nature and evidence for the revolutionary arguments of *On the Origin of Species* and his other watershed works.



Heida: A Shepherd at the Edge of the World

Steinunn Sigurðardóttir

RECOMMENDED BY: Dr Alec Costin AM FAA

This is a very different shepherd's life, spent watchful of the dangers of the earthquakes and glaciers, herding the last sheep back from the upper mountain slopes by quad bike before the deadly snows of winter descend. Heida walked away from a modelling career to take over her family farm, and this memoir explains why.

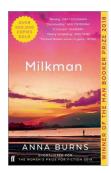


Home Fire

Kamila Shamsie

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Ashley Dunn FAA

A stunning book, beautifully written and gripping from start to finish. After years spent raising her twin siblings in the wake of their mother's death, Isma is finally studying in America, resuming a dream long deferred. But she can't stop worrying about Aneeka, her beautiful, headstrong sister back in London—or their brother, Parvaiz, who's disappeared in pursuit of his own dream: to prove himself to the dark legacy of the jihadist father he never knew.

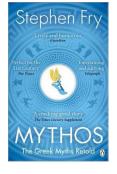


Milkman

Anna Burns

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Jenefer Blackwell FAA

Mann Booker Prize Winner in 2018—provides an intriguing insight into the troubles in Northern Ireland and living in Belfast during the '60s and '70s from the perspective of a teenage girl. The book is written as Irish people speak—fast and furious dancing from scene to scene and back again—just imagine you're listening to the Irish lilt as you read it.



Mythos: The Greek Myths Retold

Stephen Fry

RECOMMENDED BY: Emeritus Professor Tony Basten AO FAA FTSE

This book is a most entertaining description of the very human Greek gods and goddesses. The pranks and adventures they get up to remind one of the attraction of interacting with multiple deities each of whom resembles someone from amongst your friends and colleagues in everyday life.

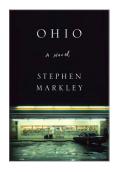


No! The Power of Disagreement in a World that Wants to Get Along

Charlan Nemeth

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Robert C. Williamson FAA

Nemeth, a professor of psychology at UC Berkeley, provides a welcome and timely antidote to the current mania for consensus at any price. She demonstrates that harmony, consensus and agreement are overrated and largely ineffective in decision-making, and that disagreement does not mean destruction or hostility, but rather that it is the best route to approach the truth: "the beginning of thought is disagreement"! A valuable book for all who work in institutions that sometimes confuse disagreement for hostility.

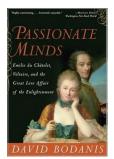


Ohio

Stephen Markley

RECOMMENDED BY: Emeritus Professor Michael Hynes FAA

In the '50s my parents were enthusiastic about the USA and we regularly read the Saturday Evening Post, a magazine conveying bucolic scenes of middle (white) America. This novel conveys this century's America progression to Trump's dystopia via the intertwined stories of high school students in New Canaan, Ohio. The cumulative effects of Middle Eastern war, factory closures, opioids, male sexual predation and terrorist bombing are horrific, but engrossing. Not for the faint-hearted.



Passionate Minds: The Great Love Affair of the Enlightenment

David Bodanis (a science journalist)

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Fiona Stanley AC FAA

This is a fascinating biography of Emilie de Chatelet who was Voltaire's lover and muse. Virtually unknown today, she was the outstanding French scientist of the 18th century. She challenged Principia Mathematica and published widely in Europe. She and Voltaire set up a beautiful country estate where she could do her wide-ranging research and which was visited by scientists and academics from all over Europe. In spite of this she was written out of the history books after her death.

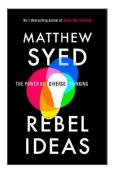


Rameau's Nephew and D'Alembert's Dream

Denis Diderot

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor David Black AO FAA

These two dialogues are dazzling examples of Diderot's radical scientific and philosophical beliefs. In Rameau's Nephew, the eccentric and foolish nephew of the famous composer Jean-Philippe Rameau meets Diderot by chance, and the two embark on a hilarious consideration of music, literature, politics and philosophy. Its companion piece, D'Alembert's Dream, outlines a material atheistic view of the universe, expressed through the fevered dreams of the author's friend.

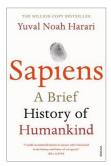


Rebel Ideas: The power of diverse thinking

Matthew Syed

RECOMMENDED BY: Emeritus Professor Michael Barber AO FAA FTSE

A fascinating account of the power of diversity but also the challenges to realising that potential. Applies to science and the way we do science. Question: With limited resources would it be better to invest to improve the 'best' climate model or invest in more models?



Sapiens: A Brief History of Mankind

Yuval Noah Harari

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Geoffrey Taylor FAA

Stunning and intelligible history of mankind. Reads like a novel. Enthralling.

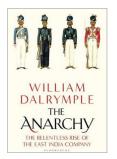


Scrublands

Chris Hammer

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Roger Tanner FAA FRS FTSE

Set in a fictional Riverina town at the height of a devastating drought, Scrublands is one of the most powerful, compelling and original crime novels to be written in Australia. In an isolated country town brought to its knees by endless drought, a charismatic and dedicated young priest calmly opens fire on his congregation, killing five parishioners before being shot dead himself.



The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company

William Dalrymple

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Roger Tanner FAA FRS FTSE

A history of the East India Company in India.

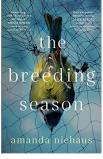


The Best Australian Science Writing 2019

Bianca Nogrady (Editor)

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Helene Marsh FAA FTSE

Thought-provoking stories, essays and poetry by Australian scientists and science writers. Topics range from astronomy to disease but concerns about the impacts of climate change dominate the book.



The Breeding Season

Amanda Niehaus

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Christine Beveridge FAA

It's a combination of science, grief and personal relationships.



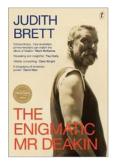
The Discovery of a Visual System: The Honeybee

Adrian Horridge

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Adrian Horridge FAA FRS



This book is the only account of what honeybees actually see. Bees detect some visual features such as edges and colours, but there is no sign that they reconstruct patterns or put together features to form objects. The surprising conclusion is that bee vision is adapted to the recognition of places, not things. This volume also sets out the curious and contentious history of how bee vision came to be understood, with an account of a century of neglect of old experimental results, errors of interpretation, sharp disagreements, and failures of the scientific method. The erratic path to understanding makes interesting reading for anyone with an interest in the workings of science.

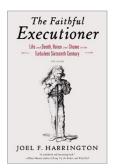


The Enigmatic Mr Deakin

Judith Brett

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Jeremy Mould FAA

As Paul Keating said, when they were giving out continents, not many people got one. Alfred Deakin helped make the continent a nation. Well written by a member of one of our sister academies.



The Faithful Executioner: Life and Death, Honor and Shame in the Turbulent Sixteenth Century

Joel F Harrington

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor David Bellwood FAA

Walking through an old castle or city one can imagine what the original inhabitants looked like; it is much harder to understand what they thought or felt. Based on the diary of a sixteenth century executioner, Harrington takes us back to Germany in the late sixteenth century and offers us a sympathetic view of life in this tumultuous time. He reveals a remarkable capacity for humanity in a brutal world and presents an overwhelming story of hope and redemption.

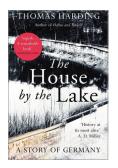


The First Churchill: Marlborough, Soldier and Statesman

Correlli Barnett

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor John Chalmers AC FAA

The emphasis of the narrative lies on the character and personality of John Churchill, his reactions to success and failure, and to the hazards of battle and of political intrigue. The course of Marlborough's war leadership in the Europe of the early 1700s is narrated with the colour, pace and immediacy suited to demonstrate his talents and achievements in the military art of his time. His triumphs and defeats of Louis IV's armies were rewarded with the building and gift of Blenheim Palace, in which Winston Churchill was born two centuries later. A career to rival that of the Duke of Wellington. Barnett is an outstanding British military historian.

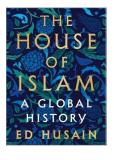


The House by the Lake: A Story of Germany

Thomas Hardina

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor David Black AO FAA

In 2013, Thomas Harding returned to his grandmother's house on the outskirts of Berlin, which he had been forced to leave when the Nazis swept to power. What was once her 'soul place' now stood empty and derelict. In a bid to save the house from demolition, Harding began to unearth the history of the five families who lived there, and a glimpse of twentieth-century Germany emerged.

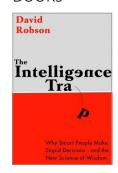


The House of Islam: A Global History

Ed Husain

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Geoff Fincher AO FAA FTSE

Ed Husain expertly and compassionately guides us through the nuances of Islam and its people, contending that the Muslim world need not be a stranger to the West, nor its enemy, but a peaceable ally.

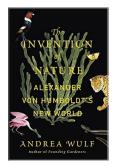


The Intelligence Trap: Why Smart People Make Dumb Mistakes

David Robson

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Bruce Kemp AO FAA FRS

This book tackles why otherwise highly intelligent people are prone to mistakes and flawed thinking. It emphasises the importance of humility and curiosity in achieving wise decisions.



The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World

Andrea Wulf

RECOMMENDED BY: Dr Elizabeth Truswell FAA

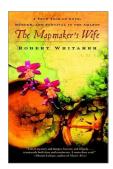
This is a dazzling account of Humboldt's search for scientific, emotional and aesthetic satisfaction throughout his long life. It takes the reader on an exhilarating voyage through the Andes, the Amazon Basin and the peaks of Kazakhstan. Importantly, however, it describes Humboldt's search for a wholeness in nature, as well as his concern for much of its preservation.

ALSO RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Graham Mitchell AO FAA FTSE

An account of the extraordinary life and travels of the world's first ecologist.

ALSO RECOMMENDED BY: Professor David Black AO FAA

This is an excellent biography of Alexander von Humboldt, described as the lost hero of science. The book is fascinating in terms of both science and history. It won the Royal Society Science Book Prize in 2017.

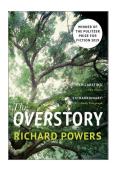


The Mapmaker's Wife

Robert Whitaker

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Jim S Williams AM FAA FTSE

It is a page-turner that traces the tenacity, courage, and adventures of three scientists from the French Academy in the mid-1700s during their travels in South America to precisely measure the distance of 1 degree of latitude at the equator and thus resolve a raging debate at the time between Newtonians and Cartesians regarding the physics that governs the universe.



The Overstory

Richard Powers

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor David Celermajer AO FAA

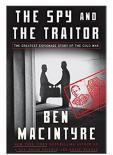
This powerful book is about the importance of trees to the planet but is so much more than this; beautiful literature, stunning insights into what motivates humans to join a cause and some wonderful science about botany. Of the stories describing the several main characters in Part One of the book, the (partly fact-based) story of the shy but committed scientist who discovers the way that trees communicate with each other and finds love despite her isolation is one of the most splendid short stories you will ever read.

ALSO RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Ian Dance FAA

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction 2019. A collection of interlocking fables, with a central theme of trees. A fact-filled panegyric for old-growth forests in the US, and stories about those who want to preserve them.

ALSO RECOMMENDED BY: Professor John Evans FAA

A weird mix of stories about trees and how humans fail to comprehend what trees achieve because our lives operate at completely different speeds.

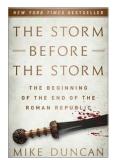


The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War

Ben Macintyre

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Nick Martin FAA

The story of the defection of Oleg Gordievsky to Britain, the most important spy of the Cold War who played a critical part in ending it, by playing intermediary between Gorbachev and Thatcher. The story of his escape from Russia is thrillingly told. I couldn't put it down.

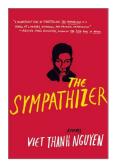


The Storm Before the Storm: The Beginning of the End of the Roman Republic

Mike Duncan

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Rod Boswell AM FAA FTSE

In the century leading up to Caesar, the Roman Republic crumbled because of selfishness, self interest and cronyism. The dawn of the rule of the psychopaths, who have no empathy for their fellows, is stylishly presented.



The Sympathizer

Viet Thanh Nguyen

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor John Evans FAA

This is a novel that is reminiscent of Catch 22. It spans the end of the war in Vietnam and subsequent years, telling the story of a man who spies for the Viet Cong from within the South Vietnamese army, moves to the US after the fall of Saigon and is captured by the North Vietnamese and imprisoned upon his return to Vietnam, despite still working for the Viet Cong.

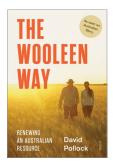


The Weekend

Charlotte Wood

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Stephen J. Simpson AC FAA FRS

The first novel to come from the Charles Perkins Writer in Residence Fellowship. A delicious exploration of ageing by one of Australia's most brilliant novelists.



The Wooleen Way: Renewing an Australian Resource

David Pollack

RECOMMENDED BY: Emeritus Professor Ross Street FAA

An enjoyable, semi-biographical account of David's vision for sustainable pastoralism in the Western Australian rangelands, 'The Wooleen Way' describes David and Frances' continual frustrations including absurd bureaucratic barriers, intransigent banks (that is, until Australian Story popularised the Pollacks' life-work and long-term vision), and political short-sightedness with its ever-changing requirements and disregard for local knowledge. A large part of the solution to re-establishing valuable native perennial grasses for eventual restocking of cattle involves allowing the dingo to reduce kangaroo and feral goat numbers so that regrowth is not immediately eaten. The return of native groundcover, trees and bushes would reduce runoff, erosion, and dust.

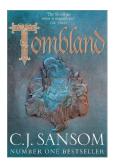


Thomas Cromwell: A Life

Diarmaid MacCulloch

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor The Honourable Barry Jones AC FAA FTSE

MacCulloch is Professor of Church History at Oxford, author of The History of Christianity and an accomplished television presenter. Hillary Mantel who knows a thing or two about Thomas Cromwell writes 'this is the biography we have been waiting for for 400 years'. MacCulloch's scholarship, analytical and narrative gifts are outstanding and—despite the grim outcome for Cromwell and so many major characters—often amusing, even hilarious. I read it twice, first very fast, then slowly to savour every line. Don't miss it.

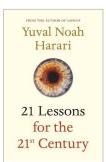


Tombland

C J Sansom

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Joss Bland-Hawthorn FAA

This marvellous historical crime series traces the fortunes of Master Shardlake, a lawyer in Tudor England, first through the reign of Henry VIII, and now during the tenure of Elizabeth I. The settings are historically accurate as for the latest in the series—Tombland—that focuses on the Kett Rebellion in Norfolk as its backstory. I am still haunted by how close England came to a very different future: there are so many parallels here with modern Britain.

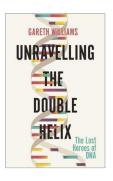


21 Lessons for the 21st Century

Yuval Noah Harari

RECOMMENDED BY: Emeritus Professor David Blair FAA

This is the third big questions book by Harari, a seguel to Sapiens and Homo Deus. He addresses the big issues that face humanity. You will not agree with all his pronouncements, but all are based on thoughtful analysis of past and present, very stimulating and easily readable.

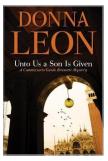


Unravelling the Double Helix: The Lost Heroes of DNA

Gareth Williams

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Alex McBratney FAA

A little bit about what Crick and Watson did. A lot about what others did (much) earlier.



Unto Us a Son is Given

Donna Leon

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor David Black AO FAA

As a favour to his wealthy father-in-law, Count Falier, Commissario Guido Brunetti agrees to investigate the seemingly innocent wish of his elderly, wealthy and childless friend Gonzalo to adopt a young man as his son, and who would then become the sole heir. Gonzalo dies unexpectedly from natural causes, but when his closest friend Berta arrives in Venice to organise a memorial service, she is strangled in her hotel room, and so the plot thickens. Donna Leon is back in top form, brilliantly plumbing the twists and turns of the human condition.

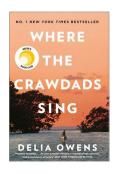


Using Nature's Shuttle: The Making of the First Genetically Modified Plants and the People Who Did it

Judith M. Heimann

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Allen Kerr AO FAA FRS

This is a fascinating account of how curiosity driven research into the plant disease crown gall led directly and rapidly to the development of GM crops and a multi-billion dollar industry. In a Foreword, the Nobel Laureate, Sir Richard Roberts, describes the development of GM crops as "probably the greatest advance in agricultural biotechnology since the invention of agriculture". Most of the basic research was done in Ghent, Belgium and Seattle, USA but it is pleasing that my contributions and those of my French and Dutch colleagues are fully recognised.



Where the Crawdads Sing

Delia Owens

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Ian Dance FAA

"For years, rumours of the 'Marsh Girl' have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark, the so-called Marsh Girl. But Kya is not what they say. Sensitive and intelligent, she has survived for years alone in the marsh that she calls home, finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand. 'Where the Crawdads Sing' is at once an exquisite ode to the natural world, a heartbreaking coming-of-age story."

– Putnam publishing



2062: The World that AI Made

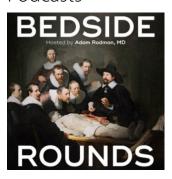
Toby Walsh

RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Toby Walsh FAA

What will the year 2062 actually look like? When the quest to build intelligent machines has effectively been successful, how will life on this planet unfold? 2062 describes the choices we need to make today to ensure that future remains bright.

TOBY WALSH

Podcasts



Bedside Rounds

Adam Rodman MD

RECOMMENDED BY: Emeritus Professor Neville Nicholls FAA

Bedside Rounds is an engaging and well-researched monthly podcast on the development of modern medicine, told from a historical perspective. Recent episodes have discussed anaesthesia, syphilis, and smoking and lung cancer. The overarching focus is on epistemology—how we know.



Death in Ice Valley

Marit Higraff and Neil McCarthy (BBC/NRK) RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Peter Koopman FAA

Addictive and atmospheric 10-episode podcast from the BBC World Service and Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, investigating a Cold War murder mystery. A charred body in a dark rainy valley, a suitcase full of obscure clues, a trail of fake identities... who, why, how? New scientific methods are brought to bear, but ultimately fail to clear the swirling fog.

Podcasts



Nice Try! Utopian

Avery Trufelman RECOMMENDED BY: Professor Douglas Hilton AO FAA FTSE

A brilliant exploration of utopias and why they've failed, presented by the fabulous Avery Trufelman.