

THE *Current*

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Sneak peek: UCSB Reads announces 2026 shortlist

Help choose the next great read. UC Santa Barbara Library has announced the shortlist of titles under consideration for UCSB Reads 2026, the 20th edition of the award-winning community-wide common [book program](#).

Representing diverse cultural, social and scientific subjects, the five titles include a novel, three works of contemporary nonfiction and a memoir.

Each year an [advisory committee](#) of UCSB faculty, staff, students and community partners selects the winning title, a book — by a living author — that’s interdisciplinary, intellectually stimulating and appealing to campus curriculums and a wide range of readers. The committee invites students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members to [vote and provide feedback](#) for their top UCSB Reads 2026 pick by Monday, July 28.

The 2026 shortlist:

Written by Geoffrey Cohen, “[Belonging: The Science of Creating Connection and Bridging Divides](#)” (W. W. Norton & Company, 2022), is a compelling look at the psychological and social science behind how people form connections, and how we can overcome division to foster greater inclusion.

[“Everything Is Tuberculosis”](#) (Crash Course Books, 2025) by John Green is an exploration of the historical, scientific and social dimensions of the contagious bacterial infection intertwined with the poignant contemporary story of a young patient in Sierra Leone.

Shelby Ven Pelt’s heartwarming and quirky novel, [“Remarkably Bright Creatures”](#) (Ecco Press, 2022), is about an unlikely friendship between a grieving woman and a clever octopus, and an unraveling of longheld family secrets.

In [“A City on Mars: Can We Settle Space, Should We Settle Space, and Have We Really Thought this Through?”](#) (Penguin Press, 2023), authors Kelly and Zach Weinersmith put forth a humorous and deeply researched exploration of the scientific, ethical and logistical challenges of colonizing space — and whether we should even try.

[“Crying in H Mart”](#) (Alfred A. Knopf, 2021) is Michele Zauner’s poignant memoir of grief, identity and Korean-American culture told through the lens of food and family after the loss of her mother.

The titles are [available for loan in multiple formats](#) at UCSB Library, Santa Barbara Public Library and Goleta Valley Public Library.

The committee will announce the winning title this fall and copies will be handed out for free to UCSB students at the UCSB Reads 2026 kickoff event early next year.

Throughout the winter and spring quarters, the library will sponsor a variety of free learning, experiential and social events to explore the book’s themes. The programming will culminate in the spring with a public lecture by the books author or authors.

Tags

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The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we

draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.