Florida International University – Undergraduate Education

Common Reading Program

SLS 1501: First-Year Experience

A Stone of Hope

A Memoir

Forgotten at eleven, arrested at fifteen, I should’ve been a statistic. I made it out for one reason: the people who didn’t treat me like one.

Jim St. Germain

with Jon Sternfeld

A Resource Guide:
Integrating A Stone of Hope into the Classroom
# Table of Contents

About the Common Reading Program ........................................................................................................2-3
  - Mission
  - What is the FIU Common Reading Program?
  - Why has FIU instituted a common reading program?
  - Common Reading History
  - How was this book selected?
  - Recommend a Book
  - How will this book be used in classes?
  - What should students do before the first day of classes?
  - Common Reading Essay Contest

About the Author/Author Visit Information ..................................................................................................4

Common Reading Module in First Year Experience ..................................................................................5-6
  - Materials for Students to Review
  - In-class Activity
  - 21st Century Skills Introduction Tie-In

Activities for Teaching ................................................................................................................................6-7

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**Author Jim St. Germain**

**Will visit FIU during the Fall semester.**

**As soon as the date is confirmed, it will be sent out to you and the students.**
2018-2019 Common Reading Program

ABOUT THE COMMON READING PROGRAM

Mission
The Common Reading Program affords students the opportunity of participating in a common curricular experience that creates community and a common ground for discussion. The program is tailored specifically for incoming first year students. Students are expected to have read the book before the first day of class and will join together with faculty and peers to discuss and think critically about key concepts. The Common Reading Program will encourage students to partake in intellectual engagement and will create a sense of community among newly admitted Panthers.

What is the FIU Common Reading Program?
The FIU Common Reading Program is targeted specifically at incoming first year students as an introduction to the academic expectations of the University. It is an effort to create a shared intellectual point of engagement for first year students and create a sense of community. As a FIU freshman, they will read the selected common reading book before the first day of class. Faculty and staff also read the book and engage students and others in discussions that challenge all to think critically about the text.

Why has FIU instituted a common reading program?
Common reading programs are increasingly popular features of first year programs at colleges and universities across the nation. After our pilot program in 2008, both students and instructors in our first year seminars reported a high level of communal and academic engagement as a result of integrating the common reading into the curriculum.

Common Reading History

- The Promise of a Pencil (2017-2018)
- In Order to Live (2016-2017)
- The Prince of Los Cucuyos (2015-2016)
- No Turning Back (2014-2015)
- Wine to Water (2013-2014)
- I’m Down (2012-2013)
- The Red Umbrella (2011-2012)
- A Chant to Soothe Wild Elephants (2010-2011)
- Funny in Farsi (2009-2010)
- Breath, Eyes, Memory (2008-2009 pilot)

For more details concerning each Common Reading book, including book descriptions and videos of past author visits please see our webpage at https://fyp.fiu.edu/common-reading.
How was this book selected?
The Common Reading Committee has faculty, staff, and student representation. After a number of books were recommended, several books were carefully reviewed and discussed. Before making a final determination the Committee members considered a variety of factors including interest, cost, readability, length, and applicability to our student population. All University community members are encouraged to make a suggestion for next year’s program.

Recommend a Book on Our Website: https://fyp.fiu.edu/common-reading
All University community members are invited to make a suggestion for the common reading book selection. A variety of factors including cost, readability, length, and applicability to our student population are taken into consideration before a final selection is made. The student learning outcomes for the Common Reading Program are as follows:

- Model intellectual engagement by participating in a shared academic experience within the first year seminar
- Create a sense of community
- Demonstrate an understanding of diverse perspectives by exploring the distinct and/or common qualities in one’s own perspectives and those of others.
- Develop interest in reading and textual exploration.

How will this book be used in classes?
The First Year Experience Seminar course has incorporated the common reading book into its curriculum. Students will be tested on material from the common reading book, and they will also write a paper related to the book and their own transition to college. Professors of other courses may choose to incorporate the book into their curriculum and/or classroom discussions.

Essay Prompt: A Stone of Hope can be read as many kinds of stories, for example: an immigrant story, a story of an outsider, a story about the juvenile justice system, a story about poverty in urban communities, a story about drugs and addiction, a story about overcoming the odds to be successful, a story about the importance of education, a story about relationships and family. Using your critical thinking skills, select a theme from Jim’s story that you can relate to, and write a 2-3 page reflective essay. Be sure to include examples from Jim’s life and your life, and how you can relate the two. This will be on the common syllabus in Canvas.

What should students do before the first day of class?

- Read the book.
- Join our Facebook page (FIU Common Reading).
- Frequently check our calendar of events on our webpage: https://fyp.fiu.edu/common-reading

Common Reading Essay Contest – Deadline February 8, 2019
Every year, first year students are welcome to submit their essays for the Common Reading Essay Contest. The essay contest (with cash prizes) will be held in the Spring semester. Students will be able to upload their essays beginning in the Summer via this link: http://libguides.fiu.edu/commonreading. This will be on the common syllabus in Canvas.
2018-2019 Common Reading Program

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/AUTHOR VISIT

Jim St. Germain

Jim St. Germain is the driving force behind PLOT. Jim works with juvenile justice involved youth and their families in New York City. He is on the Board of the National Juvenile Defender Center and the Vera’s Institute of Justice Juvenile Justice Board. In 2016, he was appointed to the White House Task Force on Twenty-First Century Policing by President Obama. Previously, Jim was a youth care worker at a juvenile facility where he was once a resident. Additionally, Jim was a member of New York State’s Division of Criminal Justice Services Youth Advisory Council. He has acted as an adviser to several governmental and non-governmental entities working with at-risk youth, including the DOJ OJJDP, SAMSHA and the Children’s Defense Fund–NY. Jim interned with New York State Assemblyman Karim Camara and has worked with Assemblyman Camara on important community matters, including reducing gun violence. Jim has worked with countless local, state and federal officials advising on matters related to juvenile justice, mentoring, mental health, substance abuse, and educational issues. Jim overcame many obstacles in his young life, emigrating from Haiti to come to the United States. His passion for public service comes from his life experiences and his sense of personal responsibility to his community. Most importantly, Jim is a dedicated father to his young son. Learn more about Jim’s passions and accomplishments at https://www.jimstgermain.com.

FROST ART MUSEUM

The Frost Art Museum is developing an exhibition in the Betty Laird Perry Gallery that will complement the Common Reading Program and introduce new students to the museum. Students can explore the exhibit on their own, or instructors and Peer Mentors can schedule 30 minute class tours.
Common Reading Module in First Year Experience

Suggested Video for Students to Review Before Class


In-Class Activity

- Have students share what they wrote in their common reading essay. This discussion could be led by your Peer Mentor. The Peer Mentor can also be tasked to ask students how Jim’s story relates to each of the Life Skills topics covered throughout the semester.

21st Century Skills Introduction

- Jim St. Germain uses 21st century skills to address issues that are of concern to him. As you introduce these ideas and concepts have the students draw connections to Jim’s experience and career. What causes do the students care about and how might those causes be addressed using these skills?

Activities for Teaching A Stone of Hope

- **Response Cards**: Give each student an index card. Ask them to briefly write down their questions, thoughts, comments, etc. and have them turn in their cards for discussion.

- **Group Discussions**: Have students pair up or get in small groups to talk about the book, the current chapter of the FYE book, and how it relates to their current experiences as a student at FIU.

- **Word Clouds**: Have students submit key words describing their thoughts on the book and talk about the most reoccurring words (pollereverywhere.com can be used).

- **Teach the Class**: Pick a theme(s) or historical event relating to the common reading book and have students teach their peers about themes in the book (poverty, juvenile justice, immigration, education, etc.).

- **Journal Writing**: At the beginning of every new chapter, have students jot down a few lines of their experiences at FIU and how they might translate into one of Jim’s experiences.

Thank you for all your contributions toward making the Common Reading Program a successful experience for our students!