

Faculty & Staff

What Millsaps faculty and staff are reading, including their own reviews and comments:

Dr. Kristen Brown, professor of philosophy, has been reading McCall Smith's *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* series, which she said she loves "because of its main character, a resourceful and caring middle-aged woman who opens a detective agency in her home country, Botswana." Her favorite book this year, however, was *Expecting Adam*, a memoir that she says reads like a novel and is funny, too. The author, Martha Beck, is a woman seeking her third degree from Harvard who decides, to the perplexity of the "intelligence-before-all" Harvardites around her, not to abort her Down syndrome baby. "It's a fun and heartwarming read that broaches a conflict between 'intelligence' and caring."

Frances Coker, professor of sociology, has been reading *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*, by Kenneth (Andy) Andrews, a Millsaps and Harvard graduate, now professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina. "This book is a critical account of the history and legacy of the Mississippi civil rights movement."

Dr. Michael Galaty, professor of anthropology, recently finished reading Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*, which chronicles the author's attempt, along with a friend, to through-walk (start to finish, Georgia to Maine) the Appalachian Trail. "The punch line is that they are both middle-aged, overweight, and entirely out of shape, and his friend is a recovering alcoholic. It is absolutely hilarious, and enlightening, too."

Dr. Eric Griffin, associate professor of English, said he found Philip Roth's latest

novel, *The Plot Against America*, to be a real page-turner. "Roth's 'what-if' vision of a 1940s America turning its back on its European allies while pandering to the Third Reich is truly chilling. Some have suggested that Roth's allegory is heavy-handed in the parallels it draws with our contemporary political climate. I understand where these readers are coming from but don't find this quality of the book objectionable. We're living in an era in which subtlety gets drowned out. So, go, Roth, show us what we might have been, and just might be becoming."

Dr. Ken Harmon, dean of the Else School of Management, has been reading two books: *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu, "a classic reference that can be applied to strategic planning," and *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*, by Natalie Goldberg, who "combines whimsical anecdotes, Zen principles, and good practical advice on being a better writer."

Allison Mays, acquisitions/serials librarian, has been reading *Ten Big Ones*, by Janet Evanovich. "The adventures of bounty hunter Stephanie Plum continue with a cast of zany characters, including her Grandmother Mazur, her sometimes boyfriend Joe Morelli, and Ranger, Man of Mystery. In this book, a gang has a contract out on Stephanie and as she tries to avoid being terminated, she can't seem to help burning up yet another car."

Jim Parks, College librarian emeritus, is reading Tony Hillerman's *Skeleton Man*, the latest in the series of mysteries by Hillerman set in the Four Corners area of the West. "These novels have a unique flavor of contemporary life and ancient lore of Native Americans mixed into crime-solving by Navajo detective Joe Leaphorn and Sergeant Jim Chee. *Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, by Thich Nhat Hanh, is a promising start on my efforts

to understand the 'core teachings of Buddhism' as promised on the cover. In 1995, I was a participant in a Millsaps Leadership Seminar, taught by then-Dean Robert King, on 'Contemplation and Action.' This remarkable seminar dealt with many aspects of contemplation, the world of Zen, and mindfulness in a way that has stayed with me since; thus my search for a good book on basic Buddhism."

Dr. Darby Ray, professor of religion and director of the Faith & Work Initiative, has finished *Linden Hills*, by Gloria Naylor, "a gripping fictional exploration into the pressures and demons of black upper-middle-class existence: part mystery novel, part gothic, with sharp doses of class, race, and gender analysis. Naylor uses Dante's *Inferno* as a model for commenting on the price of success in contemporary consumer culture."

Dr. Steven Smith, professor of religion and philosophy, has been reading Patrick Allitt's *I'm the Teacher, You're the Student*, which he calls "an Emory professor's beautifully written day-to-day account of teaching his U.S. History 1877-2000 course one recent spring semester, with wide-ranging reflection on higher education and contemporary American culture. Allitt's experiences are similar to ours here at Millsaps but with interesting differences, too." Smith has also been reading David Kherdian's *Monkey: A Journey to the West*. "The classic 16th-century spiritual quest 'novel,' a rich stew of Chinese religion and culture, is hugely entertaining in Kherdian's retelling. It's funny as all get-out and allegorically provocative at the same time (that rascal Monkey stands of course for the human mind). I'm glad this is back in print so I can use it in my Core 3 (Premodern World) class this spring."