

LP² STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

RICHARD POWERS, THREE NOVELS

Coordinators: Arlynn Brody and Stephen Kalinsky

Richard Powers is an American novelist whose work, for the most part, explores the impact of science and technology on humanity. In a career spanning more than 35 years, Powers has published 13 novels as well as essays and works of short fiction. Considered by many as one of the half dozen greatest current American writers, Powers has been long (and short) listed for the Man Booker prize, is a MacArthur Fellow, has won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. In this study group, we read three of his greatest works, *Generosity*, which explores the possibility of a “happiness gene”, *The Overstory*, an exploration of the frontier relationship between the human and the nonhuman (or more specifically man v. trees) and *Bewilderment*, a story of what it is to be human and the bewilderment of life. Or as Powers puts it:, “When you’re sure of what you’re looking at, look harder.”

Arlynn Brody, a retired Principal, and **Steve Kalinsky**, an attorney, have together coordinated study groups on politics, film, theater and literature. Here we are again. We wouldn’t want it any other way.

Type of Study Group: Mostly discussion

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

Generosity an Enhancement by Richard Powers, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009);

The Overstory by Richard Powers, (W. W. Norton & Company, 2019);

Bewilderment by Richard Powers, (W. W. Norton & Company, 2021).

All books are available in print as well as in Kindle format.

***** SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS *****

WEEK 1

TOPIC: *Generosity*

READING:

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Parts 1 and 2

QUESTIONS:

What is your first impression of Thassa? Why does Russell's moment of celebrity as a magazine writer end so soon? Who is narrating the novel?

WEEK 2

TOPIC: Generosity

READING:

Parts 3 and 4

QUESTIONS:

Are Russell and Candace good for each other? Are they a likely couple? What do you think is the route of Thassa's happiness?

WEEK 3

TOPIC: *Generosity*

READING:

Part 5

QUESTIONS:

Should Thassa have been allowed to sell her eggs? Does your view of Thomas Kurton change in the novel? How so? How did you react to the novel's closing scene? What do you believe about the nature of happiness? Genetics? Generosity? Something else...what?

WEEKS 4 to 9: *The Overstory*

WEEKS 10 to 12: *Bewilderment*