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**Sapiens: a brief history of humankind**

From Publishers Weekly: “Writing with wit and verve, Harari, professor of history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, attempts to explain how Homo sapiens came to be the dominant species on Earth as well as the sole representative of the human genus. He notes that from roughly two million years ago until about 10,000 years ago, we were not the only humans on the planet; many species preceded us, and some overlapped our tenure. Harari argues persuasively that three revolutions explain our current situation...Throughout, Harari questions whether human progress has led to increased human happiness, concluding that it’s nearly impossible to show that it has. Harari is provocative and entertaining but his expansive scope only allows him to skim the surface.”

**Mandate madness: how Congress forces states and localities to do its bidding and pay for the privilege**

From Barnes and Noble: “*Mandate Madness* explores the history, debate, and political gamesmanship surrounding unfunded federal mandates, concentrating on several of the most controversial and colorful of these laws. The cases hold lessons for those who would challenge current or future unfunded federal mandates. James T. Bennett also examines legislative efforts to rein in or repeal unfunded federal mandates. Finally, he reviews the treatment of unfunded mandates by the federal courts. Those who find wisdom in America’s traditional federalist political arrangement maintain—perhaps with more wishfulness than realism—that the unfunded federal mandate has not yet joined death and taxes as an immovable part of the modern political landscape.”

**Nothing is true and everything is possible: the surreal heart of the new Russia**

From Publishers Weekly: “This debut from television producer Pomerantsev vividly describes the decade, starting in 2001, that he spent in Vladimir Putin’s “New Russia” pursuing a film school degree and TV work. Along the way, it reveals the complex truth
about 21st-century Russia, with all of its new possibility, wealth, power, and corruption...
Highlights of the narrative include Pomerantsev’s experiences producing a TV documentary called How to Marry a Millionaire (A Gold Digger’s Guide), interviewing gangster-turned-movie star Vitaliy Djomochka, attending a lecture by Kremlin propaganda mastermind Vladislav Surkov, and sampling the excess of Moscow nightlife. Sometimes horrifying but always compelling, this book exposes the bizarre reality hiding beneath the facade of a “youthful, bouncy, glossy country.”

Slaves of the state: black incarceration from the chain gang to the penitentiary

From Barnes and Noble: “Dennis Childs argues that the incarceration of black people and other historically repressed groups in chain gangs, peon camps, prison plantations, and penitentiaries represents a ghostly perpetuation of chattel slavery. He exposes how the Thirteenth Amendment’s exception clause—allowing for enslavement as “punishment for a crime”—has inaugurated forms of racial capitalist misogynist incarceration that serve as haunting returns of conditions Africans endured in the barracoons and slave ship holds of the Middle Passage, on plantations, and in chattel slavery.”

When does gender matter?

From Barnes and Noble: “As the number of women candidates for office in the U.S. increases each election cycle, scholars are confronted with questions about the impact of their sex on their chances for success. Chief among these questions involves the influence of gender stereotypes on the decisions voters make in elections in which women run against men. While previous research has claimed that gender stereotypes undermine women's chances of success, Kathleen Dolan, through an original national survey of over 3000 adults, turns this conventional wisdom on its head.”

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"[Librarians] are subversive. You think they're just sitting there at the desk, all quiet and everything. They're like plotting the revolution, man. I wouldn't mess with them.” –Michael Moore