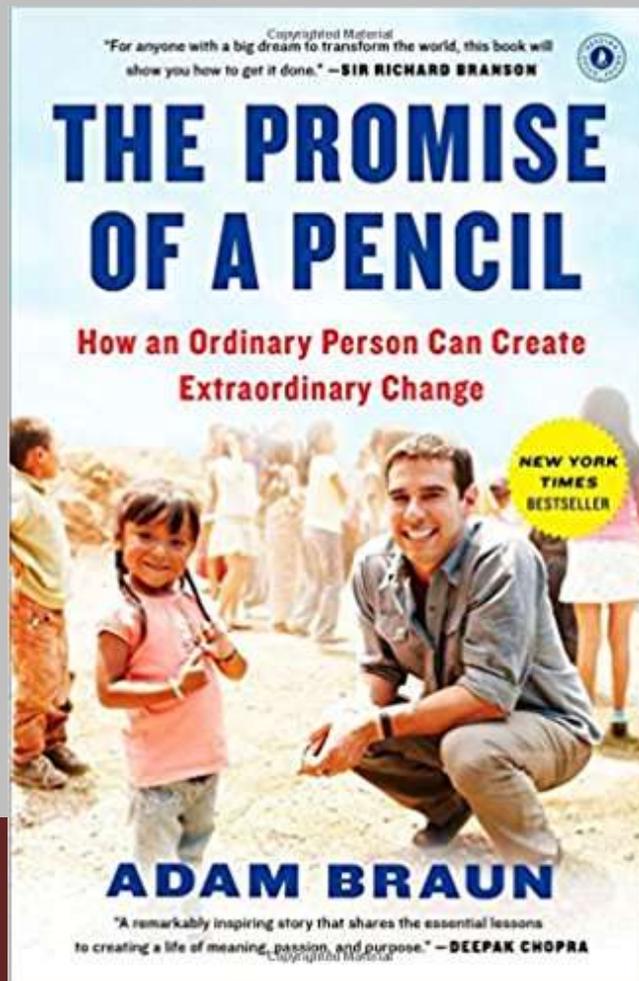


Florida International University – Undergraduate Education

Common Reading Program

SLS 1501: First-Year Experience



A Resource Guide:

Integrating *The Promise of a Pencil* into the Classroom

2017-2018 Common Reading Program

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 |
| First Year Experience Weekly Topics..... | 5-7 |
| - Course Introduction / Introduction to Common Reading | |
| - Fourth Industrial Revolution / Social Entrepreneurship | |
| - Golden Circle / 4Cs | |
| - Mental Health / Health | |
| - Time Management | |
| - Passion / College Majors | |
| - Design Thinking | |
| - Learn to Learn / Study Skills | |
| - Discovery | |
| - Creativity | |
| - Stress Management | |
| - Invention | |
| - Innovation | |
| - Opportunity | |
| - Relationships | |
| - Next Steps | |
| Activities for Teaching..... | 8-9 |
| Common Reading Reflective Essay..... | 10 |
| Promise of a Pencil Quiz..... | 11 |

2017-2018 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

[In Order to Live \(2016-2017\)](#)

[The Prince of Los Cocuyos \(2015-2016\)](#)

[No Turning Back \(2014-2015\)](#)

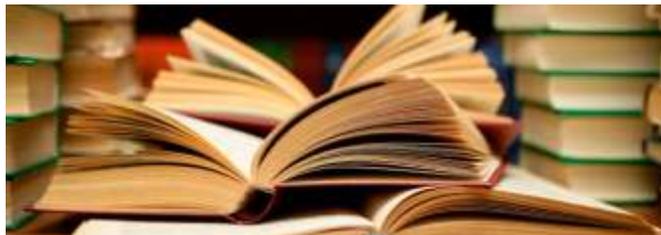
[Wine to Water \(2013-2014\)](#)

[I'm Down \(2012-2013\)](#)

[The Red Umbrella \(2011-2012\)](#)

[A Chant to Soothe Wild Elephants \(2010-2011\)](#)

[Funny in Farsi \(2009-2010\)](#)



2017-2018 Common Reading Program

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

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.

Please visit <http://undergrad.fiu.edu/common-reading/recommend-a-book.html> to submit a recommendation!

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 discuss themes 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: Please refer to assignment in Blackboard. For reference, the assignment can also be found at the end of this handout, on page 10.

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!](#) (<http://undergrad.fiu.edu/common-reading/student-events.html>)

Common Reading Essay Contest

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> The URL will be added to Blackboard.

2017-2018 Common Reading Program

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/AUTHOR VISIT

Adam Braun



Adam Braun began working summers at hedge funds when he was just sixteen years old, sprinting down the path to a successful Wall Street career. But while traveling he met a young boy begging on the streets of India, who after being asked what he wanted most in the world, simply answered, "A pencil." This small request led to a staggering series of events that took Braun backpacking through dozens of countries before eventually leaving a prestigious job to found Pencils of Promise, the award-winning organization he started with just \$25 that has since built 250 schools across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Adam Braun is an author, speaker and entrepreneur. He has been a featured speaker at the White House, the Clinton Global Initiative, and the United Nations. For more information, please visit PencilsofPromise.org and AdamBraun.com.

Please note the dates will be added to the calendar in

Blackboard:

Author Visit

Author Adam Braun will be speaking at FIU

MMC: November 1, 2017 – GC Ballrooms, 12pm

BBC: November 2, 2017 – WUC Ballrooms, 2pm



2017-2018 Common Reading Program

FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE TALKING POINTS

Week 1 – Course Introduction / Intro to Common Reading

- Refer to Adam’s Ted Talk (linked on Blackboard)
- As a means to introduce the students to each other and to the course material lead a 5-10 discussion reviewing the book. The discussion be general impressions the students had of the book, and then introduce how the text can relate to the topics discussed in the course.

Week 2 – Fourth Industrial Revolution / Social Entrepreneurship

- While discussing social entrepreneurship ask students what makes Adam a social entrepreneur.
- Lead a discussion on how this latest industrial revolution allowed Adam to do what he does. Would his techniques have been successful in a previous era?

Week 3 – Golden Circle / 4Cs

- Have the students discuss how Adam would fill out the Golden Circle.

Week 4 – Mental Health/Health

- While overseas, Adam became very sick and took several risks such as flying. Discuss with students the importance of taking care of themselves physically, and how that includes healthy eating, exercise, and obtaining health insurance if they need to.
- Adam goes through a number of stresses and frequently discusses the stress he was feeling and how overwhelmed he was. Let students know about resources such as CAPS and Victim Empowerment Program that can provide support to students.

Week 5 – Time Management

- Multiple times Adam struggled with time management, but eventually learned how to manage his time effectively. (Some examples include when he had to stay late working on a project at Bane and putting together a gala for Pencils of Promise on the same night, and when he decided to stop answering emails from Friday evening to Sunday morning but a valuable opportunity conflicted with that ideal in the form of a potential donor.)

Week 6 – Passion / College Majors

- Adam followed his passion, but he was not always supported in following that passion. Why was this so, and what can we learn from it?
- How did Adam’s major fit in to his career path?

2017-2018 Common Reading Program

Week 7 – Design Thinking / Team Discussion Time

- Do you feel like Adam employed design thinking in his approach to running Pencils of Promise? Do you feel that design thinking is always the right approach?

Week 8 – Learn to Learn/Study Skills

- Adam struggled to directly ask a donor for money and avoided doing so for most of the early part of his career. Taking the advice of his board, he eventually went to a training for leaders of non-profits and worked hard to overcome this issue. He learned from others and worked hard in order to attain his goals and better himself.
- Clearly lifelong learning benefits Adam, but the type of learning was different than the way he learned in college. What does that tell us about learning and ways that we learn?

Week 9 – Discovery / Academic Advising Discussion

- What are the roles of the advisors Adam has in his life?

Week 10 – Creativity / Team Discussion Time

- Adam approached fundraising for, and the management of, Pencils of Promise very differently than his predecessors, and that difference led to his success. If you were starting a non-profit would you try to follow the path Adam did? (Have the students consider the time that Adam started Pencils of Promise in and what has changed since then.)

Week 11 – Stress Management

- It's easy to identify times that Adam felt stressed and how he reacted (sometimes very poorly), but what were the circumstances that led to Adam being in a stressful position in the first place?

Week 12 – Invention

- Do you consider Adam to be an inventor? Why or why not?

Week 13 – Innovation / Team Discussion Time

- How was Adam able to identify an opportunity for innovation in the non-profit industry?

Week 14 – Opportunity

- There are several times where Adam has an opportunity presented to him that helps make him successful. Do most people get those same opportunities? Are there ways those opportunities can be attained by people who may not come by them naturally?

2017-2018 Common Reading Program

Week 15 – Relationships

- During his time at Bain, Adam went out drinking and partying constantly – often 5-6 times a week and getting excessively drunk each time. This became known around his office and it hurt his coworker's perception of him. Adam fell into a party culture at his office and allowed those relationships to hurt his work. Students will have many opportunities to meet people at FIU, but not all relationships are healthy, and students may find that their peers are negative influences on their schoolwork, even if they have fun together.
- As the Pencils of Promise office grew, Adam started to realize that some people were a drain on positivity and productivity in the office. Despite their being unpaid interns, Adam ultimately decided that their free labor was not worth the negative atmosphere they brought to the office and fired them. Sometimes students will have to cut negative influences from their lives in order to succeed, but that can be a difficult decision and they may require assistance navigating those relationships, especially if the person is an old friend.
- Adam was successful in large part because of his relationships. Do you feel as if you are forming similar relationships in college that he formed during his college years? How are those relationships formed?

Week 16 – Next Steps

- Several people came together to help Adam, and it took all of his experiences to help him lead Pencils of Promise effectively. Have students reflect on this past semester on how they have grown as individuals, functioning for their own future.
- What do you think the next steps are for Adam at this stage?

Please consider giving extra credit for students to attend the author visit, and encourage your Peer Mentor to go with your students:

Author Adam Braun will be speaking at FIU:

MMC: November 1, 2017 – GC Ballrooms, 12pm

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ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING *PROMISE OF A PENCIL*

- **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 (polleverywhere.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 (Value of hard work, Charitable work, 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 Adam's experiences.

2017-2018 Common Reading Program

FROST ART MUSEUM

The Frost Art Museum is excited to welcome First Year Experience instructors to bring their classes to the museum for a half hour tour of our exhibition, *Lewis Hine: Social Justice and Child Labor*, as well as an introduction to the Frost Art Museum.

For a second year, we've teamed up with the Common Reading Program to offer students the opportunity to engage with the Common Reading Book through a visual arts lens. This year, to complement Adam Braun's *The Promise of a Pencil: How an Ordinary Person Can Create Extraordinary Change*, the museum has curated an exhibition of photographs by social documentary photographer, Lewis Hine (American, 1874-1940). Just as Braun saw a way to create life-altering schools for children around the world, Lewis Hine used his photographic talents to instigate a significant change that would forever better the lives of children in America.

On assignment with the National Child Labor Committee, Lewis Hine traveled across the United States, and photographed children working in different industries, including cotton mills, glass factories, meatpacking houses, coal mines, and tobacco farms, among others. He often had to trick his way into many of the factories by pretending to be a fire inspector, salesman, or industrial photographer.

While many organizations and individuals contributed to the end of child labor in America, Lewis Hine's photographs are often accredited for inciting the American population to demand an end to child labor. His photographs document not only the harsh conditions, but also the mental psyche of the subject.

Lewis Hine: Social Justice and Child Labor will be on view at the Frost Art Museum August 12 – December 10, 2017. To arrange a tour for your class, please book on our website at <https://frost.fiu.edu/learn/tours/tour-request-form/index.html>. Tours will be available starting September 5.

This is great activity for your Peer Mentor to coordinate with the class!

Tours will last approximately 30 minutes.

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

2017-2018 Common Reading Program

Common Reading Reflective Essay

Assignment Summary: After reading and discussing the common reading book, you will write a 2 page reflective essay that describes how reading and thinking about the book has begun shaping 1) your perspectives on the purpose of college, 2) your connections to FIU, and 3) your ability to develop innovative solutions to complex problems and tasks.

Purpose: Common reading programs are meant to foster and promote campus community and connections. These programs tend to stretch from orientation into the first year; they join campus events to the classroom curriculum; and they connect personal experience and context to the larger global society. Across many campuses, common reading books and activities promote reading as a shared intellectual experience and help foster a sense of community. At FIU, the common reading is tailored specifically for first year students as an introduction to our academic expectations. As a new member of the FIU community, we ask that you read the common reading book before the first day of class, so you can join together with faculty and peers to discuss and think critically about key concepts.

Tasks: In order to write this reflective essay, you will need to:

- Review the book and your discussion notes
- Identify the main themes
- Brainstorm pieces or events that stand out in your mind. Consider why these sections are particularly memorable or significant to you. You might find it helpful to use the Brainstorming and Connecting Chart (Table 1.1) to keep track of your ideas and connections. A chart similar to this is a useful tool whenever you need to write a reflective essay/paper. Note that reflective writing is an exploration and an explanation of events – not just a description or summary of them.

Refer to specific passages in the book when establishing a bond or parallel between the story and something in your life (past, present, or future). However, do not merely quote from the book or summarize the reading. Tell your story in your own words.

Include reflections that “reflect forward” to the future as well as “reflect back” on the past; that is to say, remember to make connections to your personal goals for the future and your past experiences and interests. Above all - be honest, seek to find your true and deepest feelings about what you are trying to express. Genuine reflective writing often involves “revealing” anxieties, errors and/or weaknesses, as well as strengths and successes. This is fine (in fact it’s often essential!), as long as you remember that there is always an opportunity for growth and improvement.

Relate relevant class information to the reading and your experiences. Consider: How does the book connect to the topics discussed in the class? How did the book help you to understand the value of applying creativity to finding solutions to complex problems or tasks? What is the author’s message about creating connections, cultivating relationships, community engagement, and engaged citizenship?

Write multiple drafts. Don't let the first draft be the final draft. Put the essay down for a day or two. This will allow you to think about what you have written and make changes to the next draft.

Check and double-check your spelling and grammar. If you need particular help with any of this, please use Grammarly and/or visit the Center for Excellence in Writing: Writing Center.

Submit: Reflection Essay and Table 1.1 by or before the due date

2017-2018 Common Reading Program

The Promise of a Pencil – Quiz

Question One: What is the name of the non-profit organization Adam founded?

Pencils of Promise

Question Two: What company did Adam work for before creating his non-profit?

Bain & Company

Question Three: Adam’s brother manages various musical artists. One artist in particular became quite famous and used his fame to help Adam and his organization. Who is that artist?

Justin Bieber

Question Four: While studying abroad on his Semester at Sea trip, Adam asked a child in every country he visited a question. What was that question?

If you could have anything in the world, what would it be?

Question Five: Adam stopped referring to his non-profit organization as a “non-profit” and began using another phrase. What is that phrase?

“for-purpose”

Question Six: What is the purpose of the non-profit organization that Adam founded?

To build schools in developing countries

Question Seven: What inspired Adam to create this organization?

After the storm on the ship, Adam felt like he had a greater purpose in life. When one child said what he wanted most in the world was a pencil, it opened Adam’s eyes to the power of education, and he saw this as his mission.

Question Eight: Towards the end of the book something bad happened to two employees in Latin America. What happened to those employees and how did Adam initially respond?

They were robbed, and Adam thought they were asking for reimbursement for stolen items. He didn’t show enough care for his employees, and he even suggested they could make up details about what happened.

Question Nine: Adam honored one of his relatives when the organization’s first school opened. Who did he honor?

His grandmother

Question Ten: Adam talked about “closing the loop” with donors. What does that mean?

It refers to the communication that explained to someone where his or her money went, showing people the change they’d created in the lives of others by sending them the exact GPS location of their school along with photos, videos, and stories from the ground.