"Let’s Talk About It" is a discussion series within the Southwestern University Alumni Association book club. The series is meant to engage community members in conversations regarding a particular social theme.

Join us for our current discussion series:

THE LGBTQIA COMMUNITY

The voting link can be found by clicking on any of the book images and on the final page.
On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous is a letter from a son to a mother who cannot read. Written when the speaker, Little Dog, is in his late twenties, the letter unearths a family’s history that began before he was born — a history whose epicenter is rooted in Vietnam — and serves as a doorway into parts of his life his mother has never known, all of it leading to an unforgettable revelation. At once a witness to the fraught yet undeniable love between a single mother and her son, it is also a brutally honest exploration of race, class, and masculinity. Asking questions central to our American moment, immersed as we are in addiction, violence, and trauma, but undergirded by compassion and tenderness, On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous is as much about the power of telling one’s own story as it is about the obliterating silence of not being heard. With stunning urgency and grace, Ocean Vuong writes of people caught between disparate worlds, and asks how we heal and rescue one another without forsaking who we are. The question of how to survive, and how to make of it a kind of joy, powers the most important debut novel of many years.
In The Velvet Rage, psychologist Alan Downs draws on his own struggle with shame and anger, contemporary research, and stories from his patients to passionately describe the stages of a gay man's journey out of shame and offers practical and inspired strategies to stop the cycle of avoidance and self-defeating behavior. The Velvet Rage is an empowering book that has already changed the public discourse on gay culture and helped shape the identity of an entire generation of gay men.
No matter who we are or where we come from, we all play on the same playground. There are certain collective societal messages we hear growing up that we either consciously or subconsciously believe. As a result, we develop certain belief systems from which we operate our lives. Raising LGBTQ Allies sheds light on the deeper, multi-faceted layers of homophobia. It opens up a conversation with parents around the possibility they may have an LGBTQ child, and shows how heteronormativity can be harmful if not addressed clearly and early. Although not every parent will have an LGBTQ child, their child will jump rope or play tag with a child who is LGBTQ. By showing readers the importance of having open and authentic conversations with children at a young age, Chris Tompkins walks parents through the many ways they can prevent new generations from adopting homophobic and transphobic beliefs, while helping them explore their own subconscious biases. Offering specific actions parents, family members, and caregivers can take to help navigate conversations, address heteronormativity, and challenge societal beliefs, Raising LGBTQ Allies serves as a guide to help normalize being LGBTQ from a young age. Creating allies and a world where closets don't exist happens one child at a time. And it begins with each of us and what we say, as much as what we choose not to say.
In the Dream House is Carmen Maria Machado’s engrossing and wildly innovative account of a relationship gone bad, and a bold dissection of the mechanisms and cultural representations of psychological abuse. Tracing the full arc of a harrowing relationship with a charismatic but volatile woman, Machado struggles to make sense of how what happened to her shaped the person she was becoming. And it’s that struggle that gives the book its original structure: each chapter is driven by its own narrative trope—the haunted house, erotica, the bildungsroman—through which Machado holds the events up to the light and examines them from different angles. She looks back at her religious adolescence, unpacks the stereotype of lesbian relationships as safe and utopian, and widens the view with essayistic explorations of the history and reality of abuse in queer relationships. Machado’s dire narrative is leavened with her characteristic wit, playfulness, and openness to inquiry. She casts a critical eye over legal proceedings, fairy tales, Star Trek, and Disney villains, as well as iconic works of film and fiction. The result is a wrenching, riveting book that explodes our ideas about what a memoir can do and be.
THE BOOK OF PRIDE captures the true story of the gay rights movement from the 1960s to the present, through richly detailed, stunning interviews with the leaders, activists, and ordinary people who witnessed the movement and made it happen. These individuals fought battles both personal and political, often without the support of family or friends, frequently under the threat of violence and persecution. By shining a light on these remarkable stories of bravery and determination, THE BOOK OF PRIDE not only honors an important chapter in American history, but also empowers young people today (both LGBTQ and straight) to discover their own courage in order to create positive change. Furthermore, it serves a critically important role in ensuring the history of the LGBTQ movement can never be erased, inspiring us to resist all forms of oppression with ferocity, community, and, most importantly, pride.
FOR OUR LGBTQIA COMMUNITY SERIES WE WILL HAVE PANEL DISCUSSIONS OVER THREE BOOKS. PLEASE VOTE FOR YOUR TOP THREE BY MONDAY, OCTOBER 25.

TO VOTE:

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