

## 2026 Summer Reading List for Urban Sustainability Recommendations from Brooklyn College faculty and staff



*Thanks to our friends in the Brooklyn College library (especially Mariana Regalado) for adding information regarding where to find these books in the stacks and on-line. The library also added links to related documentaries and remind you to look for these books in your public library, too!*

1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus by Charles Mann (2005) recommended by Lisa Bloodgood  
Reframes the pre-Columbian Americas as intensively managed inhabited landscapes.  
BC Library Stacks - 2nd floor ; E61 .M266 2005

A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold (1949) recommended by Lisa Bloodgood  
A foundational articulation of the "land ethic," placing humans as members of land and ecological communities.  
BC Library Stacks - 3rd floor ; QH81 .L56 2013  
Aldo Leopold : a Sand County almanac – Documentary Film [https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY\\_BC/1148h9h/alma991027711843606121](https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY_BC/1148h9h/alma991027711843606121)

An Inconvenient Truth (2007) recommended by Zhongqi (Joshua) Cheng  
Written by VP Al Gore about climate change.  
BC Library Stacks - 3rd floor ; QC981.8 .G56 G67 2006  
An Inconvenient Truth - Documentary film New Media Center - Video ; QC981.8 .G56 G67 2006b  
An Inconvenient Sequel - Documentary film [https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY\\_BC/1148h9h/alma9994586480206124](https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY_BC/1148h9h/alma9994586480206124)

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle by Barbara Kingsolver recommended by Emily Molina  
A family's chronicle of struggles and triumphs as they rooted themselves to their Appalachian farm and adopted a locally-produced diet was met with critical acclaim, spent years on bestseller lists and won the James Beard Award.  
[https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY\\_BC/1148h9h/alma9994363160206124](https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY_BC/1148h9h/alma9994363160206124)

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013)  
recommended by Brett Branco  
There are multiple ways of creating, exchanging and passing on knowledge. This book does an exceptional job illustrating exactly that!  
Also recommended by Lisa Bloodgood  
Blends Indigenous knowledge and ecology to center reciprocity, care and relational ways of knowing.  
[https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY\\_BC/1148h9h/alma9994363160206124](https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY_BC/1148h9h/alma9994363160206124)

Carbon Democracy, Timothy Mitchell recommended by Greg Smithsimon  
Illuminating study of how the physical nature of oil vs coal creates different regimes of control and imperialism.  
BC Library Stacks – 2nd Floor ; HD9560.6 .M58x 2011

Chesapeake Requiem: A Year with the Waterman of Vanishing Tangier Island, Early Swift recommended by Greg Smithsimon  
Unusual book studying a small, isolated community in the Chesapeake Bay, and considering the changes to the island.  
[https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY\\_BC/naqmm8/cdi\\_gale\\_onefilemisc\\_PPRF\\_A546187894](https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY_BC/naqmm8/cdi_gale_onefilemisc_PPRF_A546187894)

Cities of Salt by Abdelrahman Munif (1984) recommended by Sophia Bamert

A saga about the transformations wrought by the oil industry on the landscape, politics, labor, and lifeways of the Arabian peninsula. Writing a paper about this novel my first year of grad school clarified and shaped my reading methods and fascination with infrastructure and narrative.

BC Library Stacks – 3rd Floor ; PJ7850.U514 M8413 1989

“Climate Change and Individual Duties” by Augustin Fragniere recommended by Michael Menser

[https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY\\_BC/naqmm8/cdi\\_crossref\\_primary\\_10\\_1002\\_wcc\\_422](https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY_BC/naqmm8/cdi_crossref_primary_10_1002_wcc_422)

Devotions by Mary Oliver (2017) recommended by Lisa Bloodgood

A collection of poems cultivating careful attention to the more-than-human world, inviting a practice of presence, wonder and intimate observation.

BC Library Stacks – 3rd Floor ; PS3565 .L5 A6 2017

Doomstead Days by Brian Tear recommended by Sue Landers

Lyrical, place-based poems. Gillian Conoley writes, "While Thoreau sauntered, this poet hikes America's "protected" yet poisoned lands, wades through urban asphalt runoff, stands at the end of coastal and human health—all while measuring our out-of-whack habitat with the care and accuracy of a land surveyer."

Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Maree Brown (2017) recommended by Lisa Bloodgood

Draws of patterns from natural systems to propose adaptive, decentralized approaches to social change rooted in interdependence, iteration and collective care.

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond (2016) recommended by Emily Molina

In Evicted, Princeton sociologist and MacArthur "Genius" Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee as they each struggle to keep a roof over their heads. Hailed as "wrenching and revelatory" (The Nation), "vivid and unsettling" (New York Review of Books), Evicted transforms our understanding of poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving one of twenty-first-century America's most devastating problems. Its unforgettable scenes of hope and loss remind us of the centrality of home, without which nothing else is possible.

BC Library Stacks – 2nd Floor ; HD7287.96 .U6 D47 2016

Extreme Cities by Ashley Dawson recommended by Greg Smithsimon

BC Library Stacks – 3rd Floor ; QH541.5 .C6 D38 2017

Fever Dream by Samanta Schweblin recommended by Helen Phillips

The climate fiction aspect of this book--related to pesticides and environmental toxicity--sneaks up on the reader.

BC Library Stacks - 3rd floor ; PQ7798.29.C5388 N8313 2017

Food, Farming, and Sustainability: Readings in Agricultural Law by Susan A. Schneider recommended by Margrethe Horlyck-Romanovsky

H is for Hope: Climate Change from A to Z by Elizabeth Kolbert recommended by Helen Phillips

This book, illustrated by Wesley Allsbrook, explores climate change from many different angles as it toggles between despair and hope.

Hard Times by Studs Terkel (1970) recommended by Dean Philip F. Napoli

I have critiques of it; it is old-fashioned. But it is a great read and introduction to the problems of memory and oral history.

In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of Indian Nations by Jerry Mander (1991) recommended by Ken Gould

A critique of technological "progress" and a case for Indigenous reverence for nature.

BC Library Stacks – 2nd Floor ; E98.S67 M36 1991

John McPhee's Annals of the Former World (New York Chapter) recommended by Greg Smithsimon

E98.S67 M36 1991 QE77 .M38 1998

Libertie by Kaitly Greenidge recommended by Naomi Schiller

Life and Death of the Salt Marsh by John and Mildred Teal (a 1983 classic) recommended by Brett Branco  
A love letter written by scientists for one of the most abused ecosystems on Earth. It inspired a generation of scientists, advocates and policy makers to try and preserve what is left.  
E98.S67 M36 1991 QH541.5.S24 T4

Meadowlands: Wilderness Adventures at the Edge of a City by Robert Sullivan (1999) recommended by Erika Svendsen  
Makes you laugh / cry and understand cities as natural as ourselves  
BC Library Stacks – 2nd Floor ; F142.H35 S85 1998

Nudge by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein recommended by Yehuda Klein  
This book introduces choice architecture—the idea that small changes in how options are presented (like placing fruit at eye level) can significantly improve the decisions people make about health and wealth.  
BC Library Stacks – 2nd Floor ; HB74 .P8 T53 2008

On the Move: The Overheating Earth and the Uprooting of America by Abraham Lustgarten (2024) recommended by Jeremy Porter  
Data-driven look at how climate change is already reshaping where people can live in the U.S.

Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler recommended by Rebecca Boger  
Highly recommend  
[https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY\\_BC/1148h9h/alma9994390552206124](https://cuny-bc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01CUNY_BC/1148h9h/alma9994390552206124)

Parable of the Talents by Octavia Butler recommended by Rebecca Boger  
Highly recommend  
BC Library Stacks - 3rd floor ; PS3552.U827 P38 2019

Parks for Profit: Selling Nature in the City, by Kevin Loughran recommended by Greg Smithsion  
Unusually well-written study of the building of parks and green spaces in urban areas.

Plastic by Allison Cobb recommended by Sue Landers  
Creative nonfiction that tells the story of how plastic came to be. Carolyn Forché writes: "Plastic: an Autobiography is a spinning gyre of history, biology, poetry, and chemistry, gathering centripetal force through attention to such particulars as a shard of plastic from WWII found lodged in the belly of an albatross sixty years later."

Predictably Irrational by Dan Ariely recommended by Yehuda Klein  
This book uses fascinating social experiments to show that our "irrational" behaviors are not random but predictable, from why we love "free" things to how our emotions influence our spending.  
BC Library Stacks – 2nd Floor ; BF448 .A75x 2008

Reconsidering Reparations: Why Climate Justice and Constructive Politics Are Needed in the Wake of Slavery and Colonialism by Olufemi Taiwo recommended by Michael Menser

Response-Able: How to Live Well Over Time on Planet Earth by Jamie P. Cloud recommended by Margrethe Horlyck-Romanovsky

Salt Lakes: An Unnatural History by Caroline Tracey (2026) recommended by Erika Svendsen  
On the top of my summer reading list -- comes highly recommended -- understanding self through landscapes and place

Silent Spring by Rachel Carson (1962) recommended by Zhongqi (Joshua) Cheng  
BC Library Stacks – 3rd Floor ; QH545 .P4 C38 2018

Sixth Extinction by Elizabeth Kolbert recommended by Greg Smithsion

Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered by E. F. Schumaker (1973) recommended by Ken Gould  
What should an economy do? Makes the case for an economics that serves society rather than a society that exists to serve an economy.  
Also recommended by Tammy L. Lewis  
A precursor to current thinking on minimalism and degrowth.

The Carrying by Ada Limón (2018) recommended by Lisa Bloodgood  
 A contemporary poetry collection exploring the entanglement of body, emotion and landscape, grounding ecological awareness in lived everyday experiences.  
 BC Library Stacks – 3rd Floor ; PS3612 .I496 A6 2018

The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America by Richard Rothstein (2018) recommended by Emily Molina  
 This “powerful and disturbing history” exposes how American governments deliberately imposed racial segregation on metropolitan areas nationwide (New York Times Book Review).  
 BC Library Stacks - 2nd floor ; E185.61 .R8185 2018

The Dirty Life: On Farming, Food, and Love by Kristin Kimball recommended by Emily Molina  
 From a “graceful, luminous writer with an eye for detail” (Minneapolis Star Tribune), this riveting memoir explores a year on a sustainable farm.

The Edge of the Sea by Rachel Carson (1955) recommended by Tammy L. Lewis  
 You'll wish you could take a walk along the shore with Rachel after reading this.  
 BC Library Stacks – 3rd Floor ; QH91 .C3

The Great Displacement: Climate Change and the Next American Migration by Jake Bittle (2023) recommended by Jeremy Porter  
 On-the-ground view of how climate risks and markets are driving migration and inequality.

The Ministry for the Future by Kim Stanley Robinson (2020) recommended by Ken Gould  
 Hopeful climate fiction with a sophisticated understanding of political economy.

The Mushroom at the End of the World by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2015) recommended by Lisa Bloodgood  
 Explores life and possibility within disturbed, capitalist-altered landscapes.

The One-Straw Revolution by Masanobu Fukuoka (1975) recommended by Lisa Bloodgood  
 A philosophy of natural farming emphasizing minimal intervention and ecological attunement.

The Outermost House by Henry Beston (1928) recommended by Brett Branco  
 This is the Cape Cod of my youth that I still romanticize about, before it became overdeveloped and a place that is increasingly unaffordable.  
 BC Library Stacks – 2nd Floor ; F72.C3 B42 1949

The Overstory by Richard Powers (2018) recommended by Tammy L. Lewis  
 If you're a treehugger and you like a long read.  
 Also recommended by Sophia Bamert  
 An instant classic of American environmental literature that considers storytelling on the timescale of trees. Richard Powers's novels all think through intersections of art and science in beautifully written and thought provoking ways, and this Pulitzer Prize winner is a great one for sustainability-minded readers to start with.  
 Also recommended by Naomi Schiller

The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming by David Wallace-Wells recommended by Helen Phillips  
 A riveting, well-researched deep dive into the many impacts of climate change

The Works: Anatomy of a City by Kate Ascher recommended by Emily Molina  
 A fun, visual guide to NYC's infrastructure

Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman recommended by Yehuda Klein  
 A must-read that introduces the two systems of the mind—System 1 (fast and intuitive) and System 2 (slow and logical)—and how their interaction creates systematic biases in our judgment.  
 BC Library Stacks – 2nd Floor ; BF441 .K238 2011

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate by Naomi Klein (2014) recommended by Jeremy Porter  
 A high level, structural, view that connects climate change directly to how the global economy is organized.  
 BC Library Stacks – 2nd Floor ; HC79 .E5 K56 2015

Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape by Lauret Savoy (2015) recommended by Erika Svendsen  
Personal story- beautifully written and told - about race, place, landscape and culture

Turtle Island by Gary Snyder (1974) recommended by Lisa Bloodgood  
Poems that weave ecology, labor, and place-based knowledge into a bioregional vision of human life embedded within living systems.

BC Library Stacks – 3rd Floor ; PS3569.N88 T8

Under the Feet of Jesus by Helen Maria Viramontes recommended by Margrethe Horlyck-Romanovsky

What to Carry Into the Future by Susan Landers (2025) recommended by Sophia Bamert  
Beautiful poetry by Brooklyn College staff member Susan Landers that will give you a whole new perspective on subways, urban waterways, and street trees—the ways they connect us, live in the city with us, and teach us.

Also recommended by Susan Landers

Set within New York City's subways, streets, and waterways, What to Carry Into the Future explores the form resilience takes in the face of ongoing catastrophe. Brian Teare writes, "Modeling an ethics of attention that offers an alternative to, and respite from, capitalism's unequal, unjust, Earth-destroying logics, Landers opts for repair as resistance."

BC Library Stacks - 3rd floor ; PS3562.A47576 W43 2025



HAPPY READING!