

Common Reading Book Guide *2018-2020*



On Homecoming & Belonging

Dear Students, Employees, and Community Members,

I am writing to encourage you to participate in an exciting program developed by Coconino Community College faculty and staff specifically for our students. "CCC Common Read" is an opportunity for the entire college and the communities we serve to come together for a shared experience that explores various aspects of what it means to be human. Our goal at CCC is to encourage a sense of belonging and homecoming for everyone who walks through our doors. In order to make this goal successful, we need to hear from people throughout our college community.

Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging by Sebastian Junger has been selected for this and next years' common read program for a variety of fascinating and thought-provoking reasons. We believe this amazing book will inspire self-reflection and dialogue concerning what it means to feel connected as part of a community and the very human response that can take place when that social bond is lost. Every individual will have something unique to learn from and to share with others. We hope that participation in this special project will help all of us understand challenges that others face and motivate us to connect with and serve others in need.

During the Fall 2018 semester, CCC Common Read hosted a series of events that facilitated conversations about homecoming and belonging on campus and in our community (see below). Programming continues during through Spring 2019 and the 2019-2020 academic year:

- CCC's Read Feast/Author Event– a celebration of the creativity in our communities, inspired by the theme of *Belonging* (Fall 2019 & returning Fall 2019)
- ED Talks – short presentations inspired by themes from the book/open to everyone free of charge (<https://www.coconino.edu/ed-talks>)
- Flag Ceremony and Veterans Recognition event at CCC Lone Tree Campus (November 2018)
- TED Talk screenings and Community Conversations – at the Flagstaff/Coconino Public Libraries (October 2018)
- Poetry Workshops with Museum of Northern Arizona's Poet in Residence, Jodie Hollander (October, November 2018 & April 2019)
- "War Ink" Film Screening & Participatory Public Art Project/Exhibit Opening (February -May 2019)
- Creative Nonfiction Writing Workshop (April 2019)

I invite you to view our events schedule for more details about programming at coconino.edu/common-read.

Please join us in this adventure as we connect with others and discover more about ourselves in the process. I look forward to learning along with you as we seek to understand and provide a sense of belonging through this common reading experience.

Thank you choosing Coconino Community College and for your participation in this new adventure!

Onward!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colleen A. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Colleen A. Smith, PhD
Coconino Community College President

CONTENTS

About the Author and the Book..... 1

Chapter Summaries..... 2

Core Values.....3

Statistics.....4

Read, Reflect, Experience.....5



Anna Canning
Common Read Coordinator
anna.canning@coconino.edu

CCC Common Read

CCC Common Read invites students, employees, and community members to read one book and to engage in common intellectual experiences related to that book. We encourage faculty to use the full text or excerpts in their courses as required or recommended reading. Through facilitating course adoptions and programming outside the classroom, CCC Common Read seeks to create meaningful learning opportunities which deepen students' engagement and sense of belonging at our institution and in our communities.

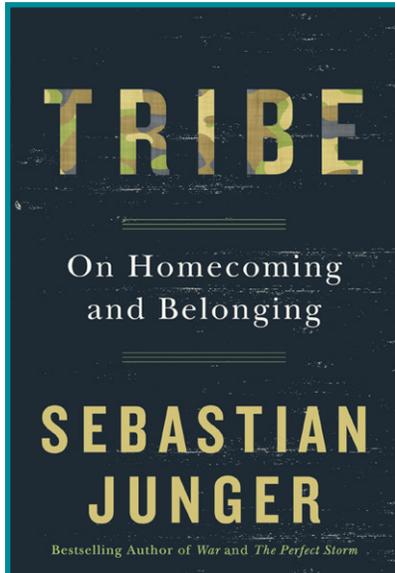
About The Author

And The Book



Sebastian Junger is an award-winning journalist, a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair*, and a special correspondent at ABC News. Initially he garnered a great deal of attention after writing *The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea* (1997), which earned him a two-year span on the list of *New York Times* Best Sellers. His attraction to adventure through shorter, exciting assignments led him to freelance journalism focused overseas.

Through a series of documentary films and his book *War* in 2010, he chronicled the war in Afghanistan. His debut film *Restrepo* was nominated for an Academy Award and won the Grand Jury Prize for a domestic documentary at the Sundance Film Festival. A graduate from Wesleyan University with a degree in cultural anthropology, his work has appeared in such magazines as *National Geographic Adventure*, *Harper's*, *American Heritage*, and *The New York Times Magazine*.



Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging examines the way war creates intimate bonds between people. Through times of adversity, humans are given a sense of purpose and connection. These experiences create collectives that depend on one another, ultimately connecting with our inherent nature as a communal species. To this point, Junger explores the relationship between combat veterans returning home and higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorders as they search for the closeness and unity in everyday society. **Tribe** explores themes of loyalty, belonging, and the human quest for finding meaning in life. This book introduces elements of tribal societies for the purpose of helping us consider ways of creating communities that thrive not from catastrophe or war, but from peace and the act of coming together in purpose. Sebastian Junger uses anecdotal historical notes, as

well as psychological and anthropological lenses to explore the tribal connection that is largely lost in today's society. The lack of clear purpose and community begs the question: how can we come together in today's divided world?

Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging by Sebastian Junger

Chapter Summaries by Aaron Rizzieri Ph.D./CCC Philosophy Faculty

Below are chapter summaries intended to support professors who are deciding how to incorporate this book into their course and to students as an aid to knowing where content appears. The overarching theme is that many current and past members of our military and many Native American persons have experienced a level of group solidarity that the rest of us would find it hard to imagine and should seek to emulate.

Chapter One: The Men and the Dogs

In the late 1700s North America was inhabited by white Americans of European descent who lived a modern lifestyle and nomadic tribal peoples who sustained themselves using stone age technology to hunt and gather in small bands. Many white Americans who lived on the frontier fled their own farms and colonies to live with the Native Americans in their tribes. In contrast, Native Americans never sought to join white society. This fact of American life perplexed many white thinkers of the era such as the puritan intellectual Increase Mather and Benjamin Franklin. Junger's first chapter is a reflection on why tribal life is attractive in comparison to our modern existence. A strength of the chapter is that he makes many comparisons which favor tribal over modern existence without romanticizing tribal life.

The greatest advantages of living the life of a nomad involves the degree to which the individual is integrated into the community as an equal. Nomadic groups are egalitarian because wealth accumulation is nearly impossible, and failure to share the goods of the tribe is an existential threat to that tribe's existence. Junger contrasts the swift judgement for "failing to share" which falls upon tribal members with the extraordinary levels of fraud and deceit in our culture that goes largely unchallenged and unpunished. Junger notes that the suicide rate in nomadic tribal cultures hovers around zero and that a panoply of mental illnesses such as depression are exceedingly rare. Widespread mental illness stemming from isolation is an artifact of modern life. Junger grounds his analysis of the advantages of communal life in features of our moral psychology which evolved in relation to selection pressures faced by our nomadic ancestors.

The title of this chapter is not particularly informative and comes from a passing comment made by a frontier woman in the late 1700's who described frontier life as a lot of fun for "the men and the dogs."

Chapter 2: War Makes You an Animal

The first thing to note about the title of chapter two is that it is deliberately ironic. When one thinks of war turning one into an animal, one naturally recalls the dehumanizing forces at work. Junger details a positive effect that a war or any other catastrophic event can have on a person and a community by activating our very instinctive tendencies towards cooperation and self-sacrifice for the common good which often guide human behavior when circumstances are most dire. Junger was once a war journalist who covered the Serbian/Bosnian conflict in the 90's. Whilst there, alongside much death and brutality, he witnessed countless instances of communal sharing which obliterated class distinctions, as well as a number of exhibitions of heroism and compassion. He generalizes his point by recounting other dire situations in which the best of our human impulses has been on display. These situations include Londoners under bombardment in the Second World War and miners trapped underground in Chile. His point is a psychological one. Humans are predisposed to help and sacrifice for one another under the kinds of conditions our nomadic and pre-technological ancestors faced on a regular basis. This is a part of our instinctive or animal nature. Modern society has brought security and comfort, but it also keeps us from having to band together in schemes of cooperation in order to resolve problems which stem from taking care of our animal needs for food and shelter.

Chapter 3: In Bitter Safety I Wake

This is the most thought provoking potentially controversial chapter in the book. The topic is post-traumatic stress disorder. Junger experienced short-term PTSD in 2000 in the form of panic attacks. Junger is a former war reporter and the unit he was embedded in in Afghanistan withstood a sustained rocket bombardment. Hence, the author has some first-hand experience observing combat. Junger cites a number of sources for the purpose of documenting the fact the number of veterans that suffer from long term PTSD is as much a function of how their society receives them when they have returned from war as it is a function of the horrors they encountered while away. He notes a number of surprising statistical facts which should give us pause when we ask, "why does long-term PTSD occur?" For example, Israeli soldiers have an exceedingly low rate of long-term PTSD sufferers in comparison with US soldiers, US combat troops who have experienced combat overseas on the front lines have lower rates of PTSD than those who rarely if ever engaged in combat directly, and finally, many soldiers who are struggling to re-adjust to mainstream civilian life long to return to war.

Junger presses us to consider the possibility that the community soldiers experience in the military, and perhaps especially in war, is of such high quality in comparison to the levels of community experienced by ordinary civilians that PTSD emerges out of a combination of longing for that community, traumatic memories, and a sense of alienation from U.S. society at large. He explores this possibility by referencing a number of studies on various groups who have experienced trauma and what societal factors predicted their rates of recovery from that trauma. He argues that one criterion for a healthy society is how well her citizens recover from trauma. In the first two chapters Junger built a case that we are an overly individualistic and radically non-tribal society. One side-effect is not only higher rates of mental illness in general (see chapter one) but more difficulty recovering from trauma.

That our veterans have a lot to teach us about community is one of the lessons the author both states and often implies in this chapter. Another is that we have become too divided and hierarchically and competitively arranged to fully access our healing potential and joys that emanate from communal life. The controversial claims in this chapter include raising the possibility that PTSD is often the wrong diagnosis for those soldiers who are having trouble adapting to civilian life and an argument that some veterans are gaming the system by having a PTSD tag applied to them. The author is careful, however, to acknowledge that the vast majority of veteran claims are in response to real suffering.

Chapter 4: Calling Home From Mars

This chapter takes its title from a comment made by a war veteran who is describing the experience of calling family members from the theatre of war in which he was fighting. The theme of this final chapter is that the US has lost a solidifying tribal identity that many Americans only experience during their military service. Hence, communal norms within the military are like "those on Mars" in comparison to communal norms outside of it. The message is threefold. First, we have a lot to learn from our veterans regarding how to participate in a community where everyone is valued equally and the greater good is emphasized. Second, our Native American communities have a lot to teach us about the use of ritual in both healing the psyche from trauma and promoting understanding in the community at large in regard to what our warriors have gone through. Third, our failure to function as a tribe reveals itself through symptoms as diverse as school shootings committed by ostracized persons, our bitter political dialogue which may have even been regarded as treasonous by past societies, and our failure to integrate racially and across class boundaries.



OUR STUDENTS OUR COMMUNITY

CCC Common Read Reflects Our Core Values

We—the District Governing Board and employees of Coconino Community College—are dedicated to providing quality educational opportunities to our community. In doing so, we commit to the following core values to guide our decisions and behaviors as we seek to meet the changing needs, aspirations, and goals of our community:

People: We strive to accept the uniqueness of each individual and the contribution each person makes. We strive to create a caring, accepting, and productive environment for our students, employees, and community.

Learning and Growth: We are dedicated to providing lifelong learning opportunities for our students, employees, and community to empower them to achieve their dreams. In this endeavor, we create learning opportunities that are accessible and relevant to our students and place the learner first.

Quality: We recognize the importance of continually improving our educational offerings and services and the need to hold our students and ourselves to high expectations and standards. We employ a dynamic, strategic planning process and constantly assess our activities to be responsive and accountable to our students, employees, and community.

Ethics: We believe that to be effective we must demonstrate integrity. Therefore, we uphold the highest ethical standards in all of our activities resulting in a responsible and fair environment for our students, employees, and community, and a responsive and open decision-making process.

Community: We exist for our community; therefore, we must be responsive to its changing needs and its diversity. To do so, we strive to provide services that are timely, accessible, and affordable. We also pursue partnerships and collaborations throughout our community to be responsive to the needs of our diverse populations.

Respect: We recognize that learning cannot occur without respect. We are committed to the acceptance of diverse cultures, differing ideas and beliefs, and the uniqueness of each individual since these are the foundations of respect.

Sustainability: We commit to innovative thinking to guide our decisions toward sustainable practices in our living and working environments. In this earnest endeavor, we strive to demonstrate adaptive leadership, eco-friendly stewardship, and quality education in a mindful and economically feasible manner. • Developmental Education to provide the curriculum necessary to prepare learners for college and the workplace.

- Economic Development to respond quickly in the advancement of regional economic development goals.
- Technology Integration to provide state-of-the-art technological education and training opportunities.
- Student Services to facilitate access to the college and to support learners' attainment of educational goals.
- Cultural and Community Service to provide programs that celebrate cultural diversity and awareness, encourage volunteer service, support community awareness, protect public welfare and support fine and performing arts.



HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE

In a sentence or two, describe what BELONGING means to you:



BELONGING

AZ VETERANS 14%



Veterans comprise roughly 14% of the AZ population.

women in the U.S. Military

90% 

Military occupations open to women

201,400

Active-duty Military

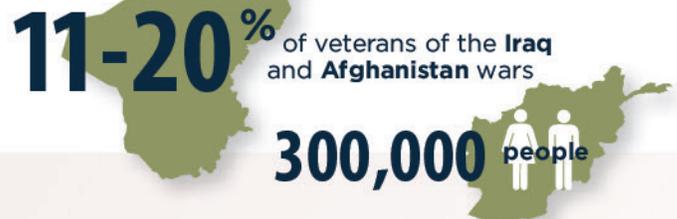
9,200

of nearly 71,400 members currently deployed

PTSD POSTTRAMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Once known only as “shell shock,” a vague condition affecting war veterans, PTSD is now recognized as an anxiety disorder brought on by a traumatic event.

Currently, PTSD AFFECTS AN ESTIMATED:



Other Statistics:

10%  5% 
will develop PTSD in their lifetime.

 7-8%
will experience PTSD at some point in their lifetime.

 55-70%
will experience a traumatic event in their lifetime.

Treatment:

While there are effective treatments available, many people, especially veterans, do not seek or receive help for the condition.

TRIBE: ON HOMECOMING AND BELONGING

Read | Reflect | Experience

Connect with Your Community

All CCC students and community members are invited to read *Tribe*. We all share this book as a common intellectual experience. Many courses at CCC have adopted the book as required or suggested reading.

Participate in Conversations

All are encouraged to attend and participate in the events we're planning around *Tribe*. Join us!

Win Prizes!

Send us Twitter, Instagram and Facebook photos that represent what homecoming, belonging, and community mean to you. Tag your pictures: **#iBelongatCCC**

Winners will be selected monthly on a rolling basis. Be creative! Have fun!

CCC Common Read acknowledges the generous support of Northern Vermont University's First Year Experience program for sharing their design for this guide. (<https://www.northernvermont.edu/student-life/services/first-year-experience>)

