



March 2024 Newsletter

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Introducing...

Four New Board Members!

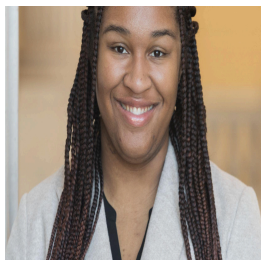
Please give a warm welcome to:

1. Our new [Membership & Outreach Chair/Webmaster](#), **Matthew Thomas!**



Matthew is an Economist at the Federal Trade Commission with a PhD in Economics from Northwestern University. His research covers a broad range of topics in microeconomic theory, including auctions, robust design, discrimination, contests, and financial markets. He was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa in 2017 at Williams College, where he completed a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and Economics.

2. Our new [Social Media Chair](#), **Alaina Ruffin!**



Alaina is a Northern Virginia native, born and raised in Herndon, VA, just outside of Washington, D.C. She recently graduated summa cum laude from George Mason University's Honors College with a Bachelor of Arts in English Writing & Rhetoric, earning additional honors from her major and for Phi Beta Kappa. Alaina is a driven, passionate advocate of Black racial and political equity, particularly in voting rights, education, and criminal legal reform. Alaina's top aspirations include continuing to work in the nonprofit realm to enhance her understanding of civil rights issues and advance equitable policies, as well as furthering her education by pursuing a Master's degree and, one day, attending law school.

3. Our new [Mentorship Network Chair](#), **Christina Hughes!**



Christina is a transplant to DC from Houston, TX, where she graduated magna cum laude from Rice University in 2013. Christina received both her bachelor's and master's degrees from Rice in Civil and Environmental Engineering and has worked in engineering consulting for the last decade. She is a licensed professional engineer in five states. Since her PBK induction in 2013, Christina has been an active alumni member and served on the board of the Houston PBK Alumni Association from 2015 to 2022 in various roles including young member engagement, scholarship committee, and Vice President of Membership.

4. Our [Treasurer](#) and newest board member, **Sarah Eckhardt**!



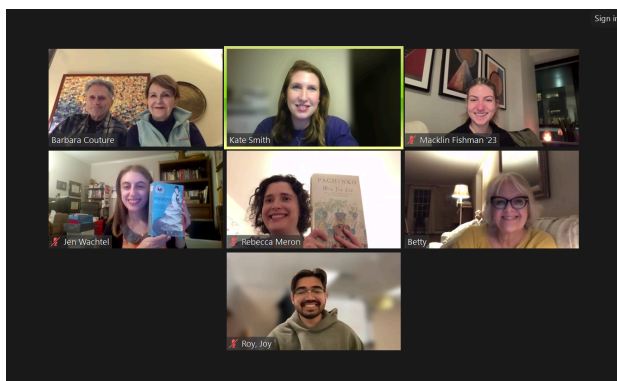
Sarah works with the Institute for Justice studying constitutional law and economics policy. She was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa while at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, from which she graduated with a bachelors of science in Economics and Mathematics in 2023. Sarah is a collector of bizarre facts, an amateur violinist, and a writer of short fiction.

If you're looking to serve, check out the [volunteer opportunities](#) section at the end of the newsletter (or on the website), and stay tuned for additional ways to make your mark!

[Book Club News and Reviews](#)

January Meeting Recap

On January 31, thirteen members of the book club met to kick off our Spring 2024 series with the much-lauded International selection ***Pachinko*, by Min Jin Lee**. One group gathered at Teaism in Dupont, the other on Zoom. Sweeping, stirring, and full of history few of us had encountered in school or otherwise, we recommend this multigenerational story of a Korean community living in Japan over several decades. We agreed pacing in the last third felt off, but this could reflect the difficulty of sustaining reader investment in the trajectories of a multitude of characters. A glimpse into everyday lives of a displaced community swept up in the political, economic, and social upheaval of the 20th century, the novel is certainly difficult to read at several points, but generated deep conversation on character motivations, decisions made based on social expectations, national identity, and World War II history.



February Meeting Recap

On February 26th, five members met to discuss the unique nonfiction selection ***Poison: The History of Potions, Powders, and Murderous Practitioners*** by **Ben Hubbard**. The group appreciated sporadic excerpts explaining the chronological socio-cultural context of ingredients and criminal activity, but overall was disappointed by the writing, format, and history featured. We felt the book too heavily relied on sensationalism and imagery, rather than delivering an interesting analysis of the topic. One of the most fascinating shifts highlighted was the switch from broad availability of various substances to individuals with largely personal motives and targets, to 20th century regulation and government production and use of dangerous substances, for good and for ill.



Upcoming Meetings

Please join us to discuss Mid-March Bonus: [Animal Farm](#) by George Orwell, Classic (1945), 128 pages.

Here are the remaining choices for the spring semester.

- March: [Never Whistle at Night: An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology](#) edited by Shane Hawk, Fiction (2023), 400 pages
- April: Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI by David Grann, Nonfiction (2017), 416 pages
- Mid-May Bonus: Asylum: A Memoir and Manifesto by Edefe Okporo, International, Nigerian (2022), 224 pages
- May: The Country of the Pointed Firs by Sarah Orne Jewett, Classic (1896), 224 pages
- June: Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver, Fiction (2022), 560 pages

Kate Smith
Book Club Chair
bookclub@dcpbk.org

High School Awards

The 2023-2024 High School Awards application is now live! Check out the [High School Awards](#) page for more information on the application, the winners from the past few years, and ways to support this longstanding DCPBK program.

The High School Awards Committee is currently reaching out to high schools in the region to ensure their seniors are aware of this opportunity and able to apply in advance of the April 6 deadline. We expect to have another extraordinary group of applicants to select from this cycle!

Sameer Jaywant
High School Awards Chair
awards@dcpbk.org

Young Professionals (YP) Network

We held a successful happy hour at Charm Thai in Foggy Bottom on February 17th, followed by an attempted brunch on the 25th. Now that the weather is warmer, I'm anticipating the possibility of a hike this month! Stay tuned for updates.

Campbell Nilsen
Young Professionals Network Chair
yp@dcpbk.org

Spanish Language Group

Join us for our [March Spanish Language Group meeting](#) on **March 27**. The meeting is open to all skill levels, but note that it will be conducted in Spanish, so a basic conversational level is recommended to be able to participate in the discussion. Click above to register. Once registered, you will receive a confirmation message with additional details. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Molly Rose Malaney
Spanish Language Group Chair
spanish@dcpbk.org

Membership & Outreach

DCPBK is excited to announce our first [Coffee & Conversation](#) event for 2024! To get things started for 2024, Matthew Thomas, current DCPBK Membership & Outreach Chair/Webmaster, will give a presentation on minimum wage regulation on Tuesday, March 26. Matthew Thomas is an economist at the Federal Trade Commission who researches

auctions and labor regulation. Guests are welcome and encouraged to attend. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Matthew Thomas
Membership & Outreach Chair/Webmaster
membership@dcpbk.org

[Volunteer Opportunities](#)

Are you looking to get more involved with DCPBK? Take a peek at the following opportunities to serve our members:

[Events & Programs Committee](#)

DCPBK is seeking to recruit **3-5 members** to sit on the [Events & Programs Committee](#), co-chaired by our Vice President of Member Experience and Membership & Outreach Coordinator. Committee members will assist the VPME with planning annual events, and Membership with planning and incubating new programs for DCPBK. Volunteers must be members of DCPBK in good standing.

Click here to see the [Full Position Description](#). Please let us know if you are interested! Email your resume and a brief paragraph of interest to volunteer@dcpbk.org.

[Fundraising & Development Chair](#)

DCPBK is seeking to recruit a [Fundraising & Development Chair](#) to help us maintain our operating budget, assist with the High School Awards Program, and keep the website's fundraising pages up to date. Volunteers must be members of DCPBK in good standing.

Click here to see the [Full Position Description](#). Please let us know if you are interested! Email your resume and a brief paragraph of interest to volunteer@dcpbk.org.

Niku Neshati
President
president@dcpbk.org

DC Area Phi Beta Kappa Association Board

2023-2024

Officers

President: Niku Neshati (George Mason University, 2018)

Vice President of Chapter Relations: Catherine Stallsmith (Elon University, 2022)

Vice President of Member Experience: Kyle Coen (Colorado State University, 2000)

Secretary: Clen “Damon” Moore (University of Mississippi, 2020)

Treasurer: Sarah Eckhardt (University of Wisconsin, 2023)

At-Large Executive Committee Members

Newsletter Editor: Carol L. Bontempo (University of Connecticut, 1962)

Past President: Paul Lubliner (University of Oregon, 2006)

Past President: Elizabeth “Liz” Marshall Anderson (Lawrence University, 2009)

Book Club Chair: Kate H. Smith (Boston University, 2010)

Fundraising & Development Chair: VACANT

Advisory Council

Past Vice President: Deirdre LaPin (Agnes Scott College, 1967)

Past President: Christel G. McDonald (George Washington University, 1986)

Past President: Lindsay Marissa Osborne (University of Hawai’i, 2021)

Volunteers

Young Professionals Network Chair: Campbell Nilsen (University of Oklahoma, 2017)

High School Awards Chair: Sameer Jaywant (New York University, 2014)

Membership & Outreach Chair/Webmaster: Matthew Thomas (Williams College, 2017)

Social Media Chair: Alaina Ruffin (George Mason University, 2023)

Mentorship Network Chair: Christina Hughes (Rice University, 2013)

Committees

High School Awards Committee

Events & Programs Committee