



2019 Summer Reading List for the First Minister

Acknowledgments

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About the David Hume Institute

The David Hume Institute is an independent, non-partisan, evidence-based policy institute that has been operating at the heart of Scottish policy debate for more than 30 years.

Events that are open to all

We host thought-provoking events which bring together expert speakers and an informed, interested and engaged audience. Our speakers come from across the political spectrum, both nationally and internationally.

Research on some of the country's most pressing challenges

We aim to produce original research with a strong emphasis on economic and education policy issues. Our research is independent and evidence-based and we share our ideas with policymakers from all sides of the political spectrum.

We take the perspective of the Scottish public rather than that of any interest group. To safeguard our independence, we receive no government funding and do not undertake commissioned work. We are rigorous in obtaining the best available evidence from our own data analysis and from published work.

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A summer reading list for the First Minister

Bringing together some of the best recent writing from Scotland and beyond, the 2019 First Minister's Summer Reading List is intended as a fresh way to stimulate debate about the state of the nation and the world.

While the Institute does not endorse every view expressed in the books, they are all good reads, based on evidence and with something of significance to say. Nicola Sturgeon is known for her love of books and reading, but we have the office of First Minister in mind rather than any particular incumbent. We hope the First Minister – or indeed any Scot – will find them thought-provoking and an enjoyable addition to their summer break.

Here are our 2019 choices (in no particular order):

- *Our Towns*, James Fallows and Deborah Fallows (2018)
- *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*, Caroline Criado Perez (2019)
- *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth*, Benjamin Friedman (2005)
- *Where are the Women?*, Sara Sheridan (2019)
- *The Silent Traveller in Edinburgh*, Chiang Yee (1948)
- *Factfulness*, Hans Rosling, Ola Rosling and Anna Rosling Rönnlund (2018)

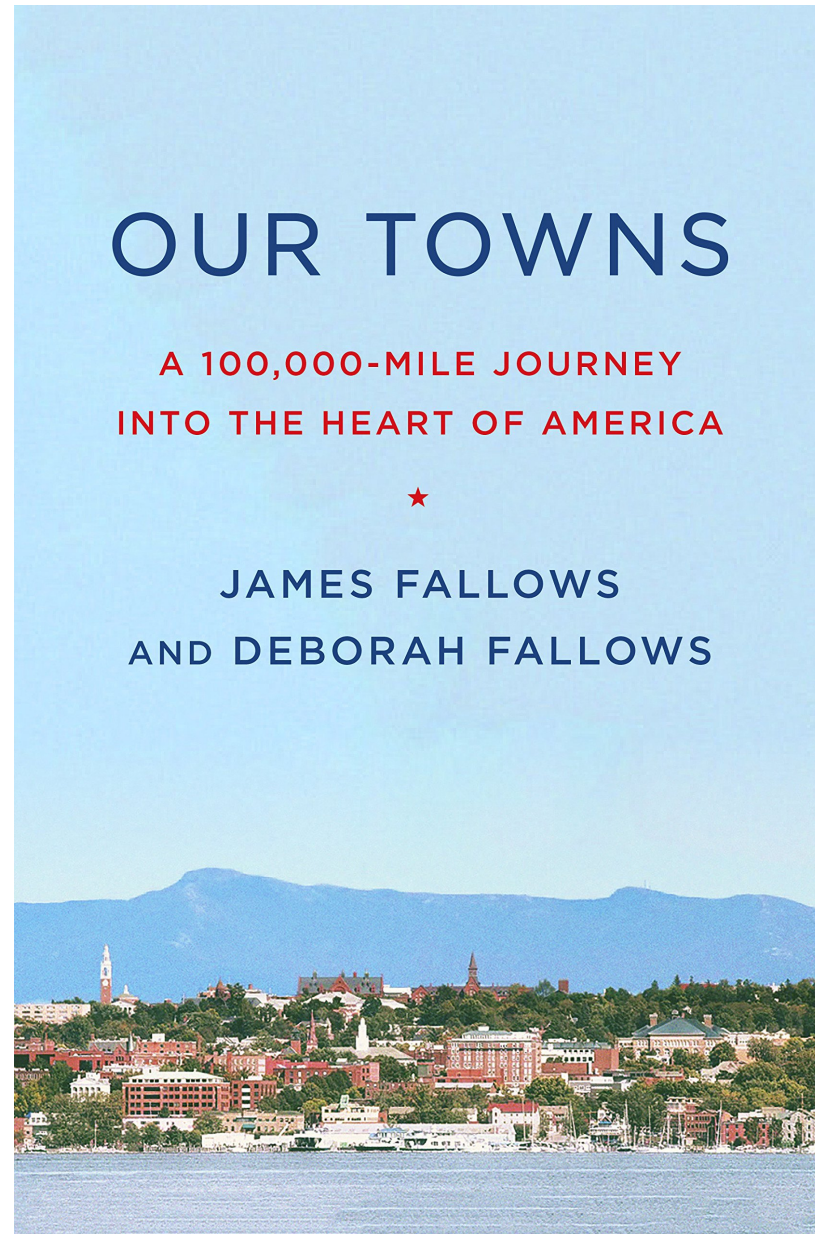
Our Towns, James Fallows and Deborah Fallows (2018)

In researching *Our Towns*, James and Deborah Fallows travelled to small cities and towns across the United States in a single-engine prop plane. They found an America acutely conscious of its problems – from economic dislocation to opioid addiction – but that is also creating solutions, with a pragmatic determination missing from the paralysis of federal politics.

The Fallows point to places where politicians were elected and stayed in office, despite their respective communities being strongholds of the opposite party: they remained popular because they focused on concrete solutions and avoided polarising rhetoric.

Time and again, they found towns across the US to be more resilient, flexible and dynamic than many realize. Lessons for urban renewal are offered: on the importance of a town's ambitions for its downtown; on public-private partnerships that help communities get into a groove and show government working well; on the benefits of a welcoming attitude toward immigrants.

This portrait of civic and economic reinvention – awareness of which is largely absent from public debate – is unexpected, heartening news. The authors believe that if more Americans knew about the reversals that remain under-reported and under-appreciated, they'd feel more optimistic, and more likely to take action.



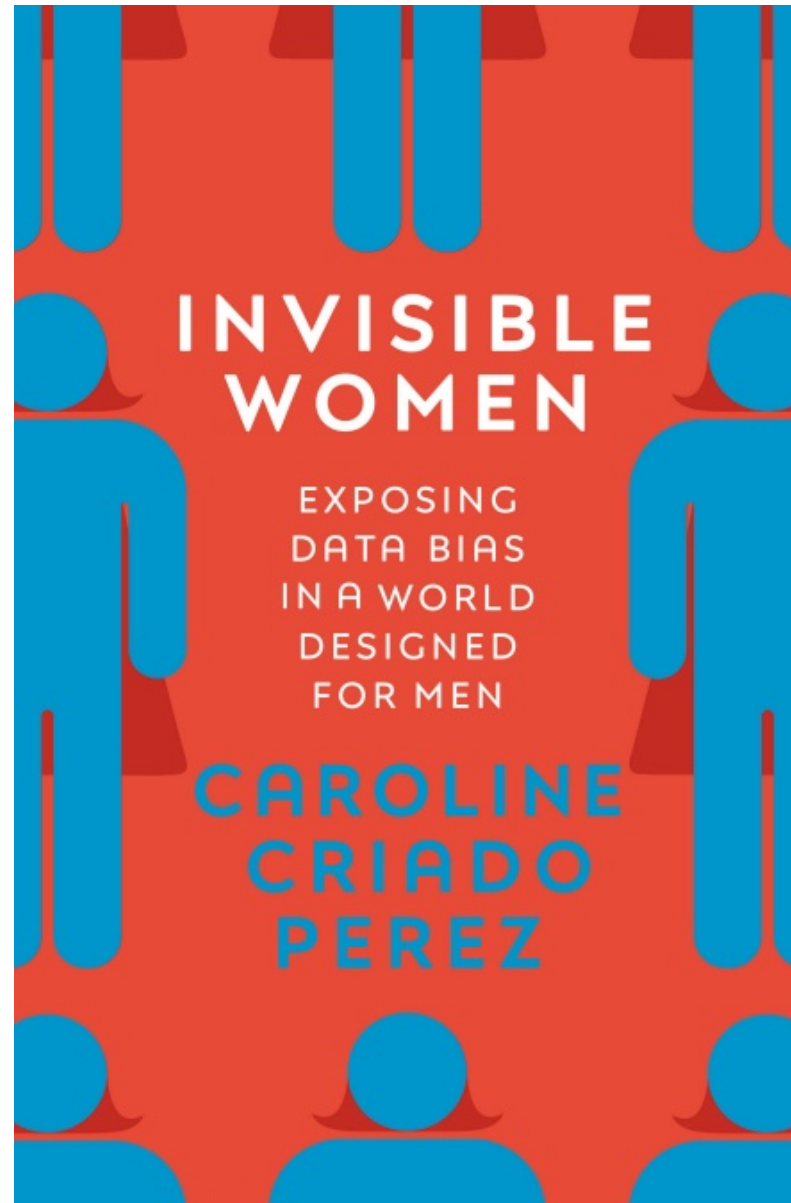
Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men, Caroline Criado Perez (2019)

This book offers 'a story about absence', the absence of data about women, their lives and their bodies from the decision-making that shapes our world. 'Most of recorded human history', argues Caroline Criado Perez, 'is one big data gap – the lives of men have been taken to represent those of humans overall. When it comes to the lives of the other half of humanity, there is often nothing but silence.'

Drawing on examples ranging from medical research to transport planning, and from disaster relief to fitness apps, Criado Perez shows how the data underpinning the design of public policy, products and services have failed to take account of differences between men and women, and how systematic (if often unintended) gender data bias has led to worse outcomes for women, as well as society as a whole.

Setting out a wide array of evidence with journalistic crispness, the author combines righteous anger with a sharp dose of wit. And joining the dots between disparate fields, she shows how incomplete and gender-biased data lead to bad decisions.

The answer, she argues, lies in better, more gender-disaggregated data-gathering and analysis, but also in wider representation of women among decision-makers. Policymakers and politicians everywhere should take note.



The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth, Benjamin Friedman (2005)

The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth by Harvard economics professor Benjamin Friedman is a useful counter to those who would say that capitalism has had its day. Friedman lays out the benefits of economic growth – from delivering social justice to assisting in the fight for racial equality – and argues that periods of social advancement come alongside periods of growth.

The book is detailed and well researched, a reminder that no matter what problems may exist with capitalism, we are still to find a system that can produce similar levels of economic prosperity and advancement for as many people.

However, *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth* is also a product of its time. Written in 2005 – before the 2008 financial crisis – it can sometimes appear out of date. As issues such as climate change have climbed the global political agenda, the defence of economic growth in the face of environmental damage seems at odds with more recent orthodoxy.

What this book does really well is challenge the reader to reassess what they think of capitalism and why. As populist politicians of the right and left drift towards significant market interventions and protectionist policies, it is a useful counterpoint to anyone who claims that capitalism and the growth it brings has damaged our society.

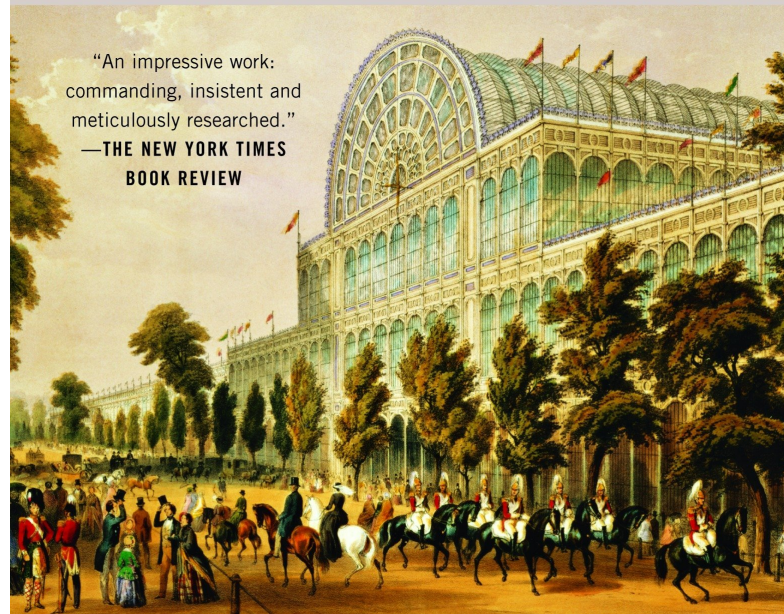


BENJAMIN M. FRIEDMAN

THE MORAL CONSEQUENCES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

"An impressive work:
commanding, insistent and
meticulously researched."

—THE NEW YORK TIMES
BOOK REVIEW



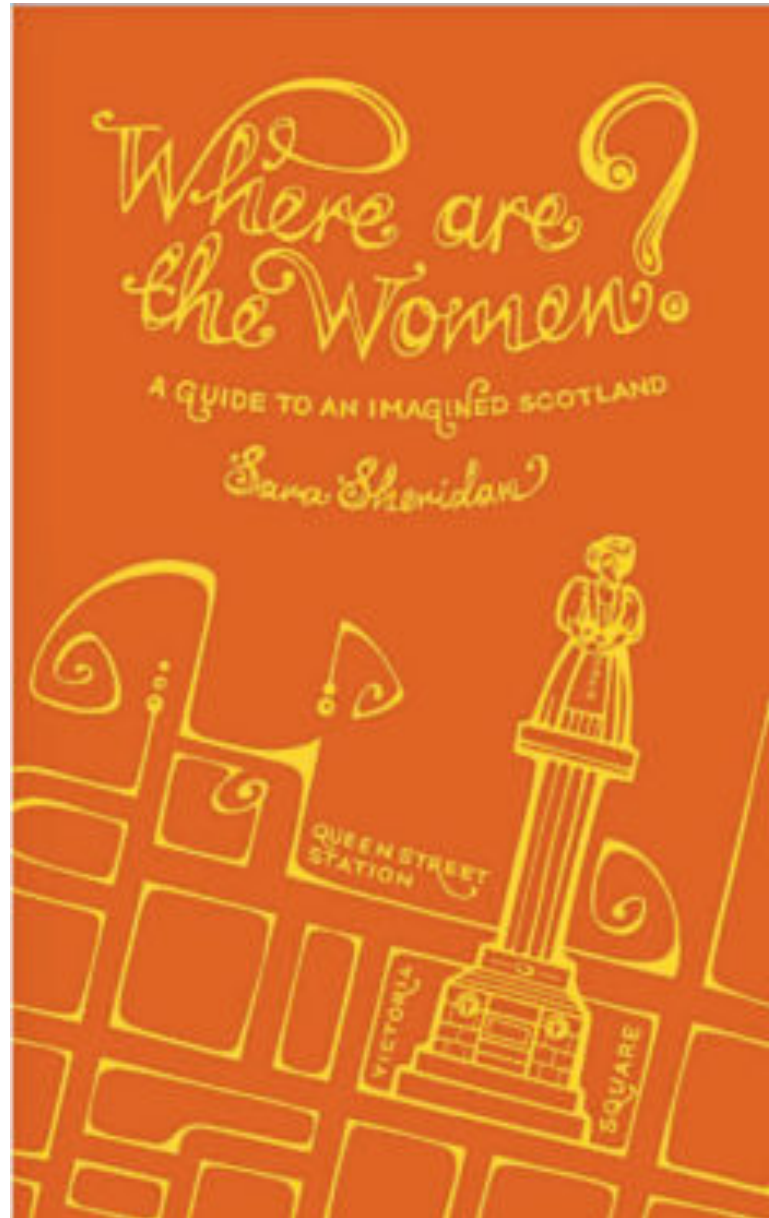
Where are the Women? A Guide to an Imagined Scotland, Sara Sheridan (2019)

Maps are full of places named after people, but the overwhelming majority of those people are men. Inspired by Rebecca Solnit's alternative New York Subway map that commemorates women's success rather than men's, Sara Sheridan's *Where are the Women?* redraws the map of Scotland.

In this imagined Scotland, the West Highland Way ends at Fort Mary, the cave on Staffa is named after Malvina rather than Fingal, and Arthur's Seat is actually Triduana's. In Dundee, trains pull into Slessor Station, and the plinths in central Glasgow proudly display statues of suffragettes.

Winnie Drinkwater, the first woman in the world to hold a commercial pilot's licence, is remembered, along with Williamina Fleming, who discovered hundreds of new stars, and Robina Laidlaw, a celebrated pianist to whom Schubert dedicated his *Fantasiestücke Opus 12*.

This alternative atlas deepens the reader's knowledge of Scotland, adding an extra layer of meaning to familiar streets, towns and countryside. The result is a map of women, ordinary and extraordinary, to add to the existing one of men.



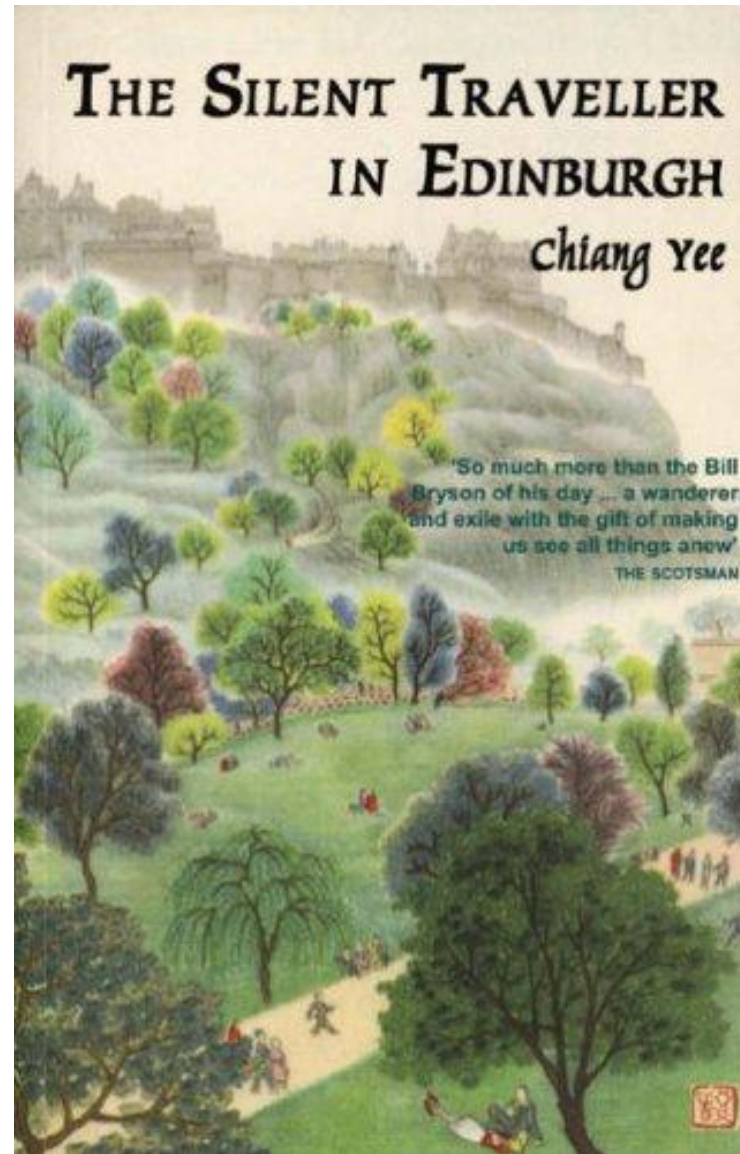
The Silent Traveller in Edinburgh, Chiang Yee
(1948)

Chiang Yee left China in 1933 to study in London and ended up living and working in Britain for 20 years, after which he moved to the United States. His 'Silent Traveller' series celebrated cities and places in both countries; *The Silent Traveller in Edinburgh* was first published in 1948, with this new edition from Birlinn published more than 70 years later.

The book includes strikingly defamiliarizing illustrations, familiar Edinburgh views rendered in a recognisably Chinese style, which Chiang created using traditional materials and artistic principles from his native country.

Interwoven with references to China, as well as reflections on Chinese cultural history and traditions, *The Silent Traveller* also introduces us to Confucian philosophy and Chinese poetry, reflected through the lens of Scottish experiences.

Arthur's Seat is likened to an elephant, and the author is fascinated by things we might not think of, such as beards. The result is an unusual reversal of perspectives: written by a Chinese exile at a time when Western books about China were common but books about the West by a Chinese author were exceptionally rare, Edinburgh and its inhabitants are the 'exotic' subject matter. China has only increased in importance since this book was first published; Chiang Yee can help us understand how they might see us.



***Factfulness*, Hans Rosling, Ola Rosling and Anna Rosling Rönnlund (2018)**

It was the American television comedian Stephen Colbert who coined the term 'truthiness', something that *feels* true without necessarily being so. He first used it in 2005, although it later became associated with the 'post-fact' world, one in which politicians appealed to gut feeling rather than empirical reality. Hans Rosling's book *Factfulness* is a comprehensive reply to that phenomenon.

When asked simple questions about global trends – why the world's population is increasing; how many young women go to school; how many of the world's population live in poverty, most people get the answers very wrong. Through graphs and personal anecdote, Rosling (and two long-time collaborators, Ola and Anna) explain why this happens, setting out ten 'instincts' that distort our perspectives.

In part, Rosling (politely) holds the media responsible, for prioritising bad news over good, and also what he calls 'rosy pasts', a tendency by nations to 'glorify their histories', which leads the living to assume the present to be inferior to the past. But as the author – who would swallow swords during lectures to demonstrate that the seemingly impossible is possible – concludes, a fact-based worldview actually points to a world that isn't as bad as it seems.

