Introduction
The common literature experience gives incoming students, faculty, staff, and community members a common piece of literature to read and discuss at the same time. The selection for 2018-19 is The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics by Daniel James Brown. The author will be addressing Connections students at the literature convocation on Thursday, August 23 at 9 a.m.

Brown’s book is a gripping story of how a group of individuals conquered pain, hardship and challenges to bring together a singularly dedicated team that rose to success in a world that was headed for crisis. The book is about what it means to dare to greatness as Olympic oarsmen, but also very much about what it means to be human.

Author Daniel James Brown is this year’s convocation speaker. Brown grew up in the San Francisco Bay area and attended the University of California at Berkeley. He taught writing at San Jose State University and Stanford before becoming a technical writer and editor, first in Silicon Valley and later at Microsoft. He now writes narrative nonfiction books full time. His primary interest as a writer is in bringing compelling historical events to life as vividly and accurately as he can.

The Boys in the Boat was selected as this year’s USU Common Literature book because it aligns with the Connections course objectives—the “Big Questions” of how we define our purpose, how we best learn, and how we engage with our communities.

In addition to The Boys in the Boat, all incoming students at USU read Becoming a Learner, Realizing the Opportunity of Education, by Dr. Matthew Sanders. Students receive this short book at Aggie Orientation, and discuss it frequently in the USU 1010 Connections course.

Connections Assignment
The common literature assignment is designed to introduce you to college-level expectations with respect to reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing. You will also discuss the book with your Connections class.

Before you read the book:
Read the prompts first. Keeping the prompts in mind while you read will help you think more broadly and critically about the themes in the book and mark quotations that will help you when writing your response. Finish reading the entire book before joining the online discussion in Canvas about the prompts.
Take notes in your book. In college, your textbooks belong to you! Learn now to highlight, annotate, and mark passages in your book as you read. This will help you not only as you respond to the prompts, but also as you participate in class discussions.
Follow directions. Many college students miss points simply because they do not read and follow directions listed on the assignment.
Instructions

Choose two of the following prompts and write a discussion post for each on the discussion board in Canvas (a total of 2 posts). Please make sure you do each of the following. You may want to make a checklist for yourself so that you don't miss any aspect of this multi-part assignment.

1. clearly identify which question you are answering,
2. provide a substantial and meaningful example from the book or additional resources that illustrate your position,
3. write 200-250 of your own words (in addition to the quoted examples from the book) of reflection in response to the prompt, and then;
4. return to the discussion board and make a minimum of two substantive comments in response to the posts of your classmates.*

You must make a total of four posts on the discussion boards, your two original posts and then two substantive* responses to the posts of your classmates.

*A substantive comment is a post that demonstrates substance and contributes to the understanding and application of ideas by doing one or more of the following:

- Reflect about meaning of the topic.
- Describe thoughtful new insights about the topic.
- Raise a question as a seed for clarification or further discussion.

A substantive comment is NOT the following:

- Merely a statement of agreement or disagreement or an expression of your feelings.
- Bullying or attacking the person who made the initial post.
- A comment that lacks purpose (such as, “I have nothing more to add.”)
- A long series of quotations from the book. 200-250 words must be YOUR words and not a quotation.

You are to select two of the following prompts for your discussion posts. Read the prompts carefully; there are multiple parts to each prompt. Make sure you address each part of the prompts you select.

1. Provide at least three examples of how the rowing team and coaches became a learning community for Joe Rantz, then, discuss the importance of a learning community for those who seek to become lifelong learners. Select at least one point from Becoming a Learner to support your position.

2. From the time he was a young boy, Joe Rantz faced many tragedies and difficulties. Identify a least three low points for Joe and discuss the characteristics, attitudes, and people that helped him be resilient in the face of these difficulties. Provide at least one quote from Becoming a Learner to support your position.

3. Although the boys bonded in the boat, they did not initially go to the university to become rowers. Select at least three of the boys and identify each of their motivations for attending the university and discuss how those motivations relate to becoming a lifelong learner. Provide at least one quote from Becoming a Learner to support your position.

4. Daniel James Brown spends a significant amount of time describing the Nazi propaganda machine. Provide at least two examples of this propaganda and discuss the importance of a citizenry that engages in critical thinking. Select at least two points from Becoming a Learner to support your position.
Discussion in Canvas

Good discussion posts:
• Are clear and to the point (no ambiguity or digression).
• Answer all of the questions in the prompt. Make sure you re-read the prompt after you have drafted your responses to make sure you answered every part of the question.
• Use specific examples from the reading.
• Have good mechanics and grammar.

Discussions are public; all members in the course can view all responses.

To post/open/read/respond to a discussion:
2. Click Discussions on the left hand side.
3. To post or respond, open the discussion and click Reply. (Depending on the course settings enabled by your instructor, you may be able to reply, add an attachment, edit your replies, etc.)

For further instruction on participating in a discussion via Canvas go to https://community.canvaslms.com/videos/1128.

Fully participate in the discussion via Canvas by 9 a.m. on Wednesday, August 22. Make sure you complete your two original posts, and at least two substantive comments in reply to the posts of your classmates. Connections Canvas sections will open on August 15 at https://canvas.usu.edu.

Academic Integrity and the Student Code
Utah State University expects students to conduct themselves with the foremost level of academic integrity. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, representing the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own (including paraphrasing or direct quotation), using materials prepared by another person or agency, and failing to appropriately cite sources. USU utilizes a global plagiarism prevention software to ensure students are submitting original work. This software compares assignment submissions to a large database of papers found online or submitted both locally at USU and throughout the world. For more information, see https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode/.

Works Cited