

UPJ SUMMER READING PROGRAM FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

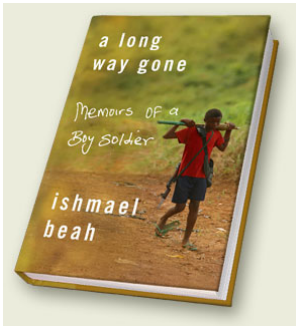
What is the Summer Reading Project?

This initiative is designed for incoming first-year students with several goals in mind:

- To create a common reading and learning experience for you to share with fellow UPJ students
- To introduce you to the academic expectations of our institution
- To help you develop critical thinking skills to apply to important topical issues
- To encourage scholarly discourse and participation in discussions and programs related to the book's themes

What is this year's Summer Reading Project selection?

The 2009 selection is **A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier**, Ishmael



Beah's memoir as a teen enmeshed in Sierra Leone's bloody civil war and his transformation into a human rights advocate. The candid and heart wrenching account may be an emotionally difficult read, but an important one.

The official website for **A Long Way Gone** (<http://www.alongwaygone.com/>) offers this description:

In A LONG WAY GONE, Beah, now twenty-six years old, tells a riveting story. At the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he'd been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts. Eventually released by the army and sent to a UNICEF rehabilitation center, he struggled to regain his humanity and to reenter the world of civilians, who viewed him with fear and suspicion. This is, at last, a story of redemption and hope.

Students will use critical thinking skills to consider these and other questions:

- In learning about the civil war in Sierra Leone and Beah's own experiences, what have we learned about the highs and lows of human nature?
- What lessons can we learn from A Long Way Gone vital to ending crimes against humanity?
- What characteristics does Ishmael Beah possess that led him to heal from the terrible atrocities of war and transform into an advocate for human rights?
- Does our country have a responsibility to intervene in foreign crises?
- What is your own role and responsibility in a global community?
- What inspires you, what is your true calling in life?



This is a wrenching, beautiful, and mesmerizing tale. Beah's amazing saga provides a haunting lesson about how gentle folks can be capable of great brutalities as well as goodness and courage. It will leave you breathless.

--Walter Isaacson, author of Benjamin Franklin: An American Life

What are the components of the Summer Reading Project?

- **First and foremost:** Read the book! Consider this your first academic assignment at UPJ.
- **Two:** Supplement your reading by checking out these resources:
 - Listen to Beah describe why he wrote **A Long Way Gone**, learn more about the war in Sierra Leone and more about Beah himself at <http://www.alongwaygone.com/media.html>.

--Beah sits on the board of Human Rights Watch. Learn more about this important organization at <http://www.hrw.org/en/about>.



--Find out more about Sierra Leone's location and civil war at <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L31424017.htm>

--Learn more about child soldiers in Sierra Leone, landmines in Cambodia and poverty in the United States plus much more at the UN Works website: <http://www.un.org/works/>.



- **Three:** Content from the book is integrated into the curriculum of University Scholarship, the required one-credit course for first-year students. Some instructors will focus heavily on content from **A Long Way Gone**, while other instructors will place less of an emphasis on the book. Regardless of your section of the course, we want

all first-year students to share the common experience of reading **A Long Way Gone**.

- **Four:** Plan to attend the *A Long Way Gone Program Series*, which consists of programs and events that reflect the themes of the reading selection. The series will take place in the fall and is especially designed for first-year students.

More food for thought...

- Do not just read the pages of this book—we want you to think critically about what you are reading--examining each idea, each emotional and intellectual reaction you have. You should test the ideas against the knowledge and experiences you have and decide what information you need to seek out before drawing conclusions. It is through this critical thinking process that you will make personal discoveries and become an active learner, well-equipped for the demands of collegiate academic work.

To learn more about critical thinking in college, visit East Tennessee University's site at http://www.etsu.edu/criticalthinking/what_is_ct.asp