



A Guide to Popular Student Books on Intelligence

What do students think they know about intelligence before they walk into the classroom?

by Edward F. Mickolus, PhD

During my decades with the Central Intelligence Agency, I had the opportunity to chat with thousands of students and applicants to the Intelligence Community. They bring with them points of view that are shaped by the news media, entertainment industry, blogs, wikis, social networks, and on occasion, even books. Professors routinely provide their charges with lists of books that are designed to give students a handle on what the intelligence business is all about.

Whatever a list of suggested readings includes, readers' opinions will be shaped by a host of books, accurate and inaccurate, balanced and rabidly pro- or anti-intelligence. The following is a sample of what students are reading; some of these books will appear on your recommended list, and some you would not recommend under any circumstances. This list is not complete, nor an endorsement of any particular book. It rather gives an idea of what has shaped the attitudes an instructor can expect to find in the classroom and is organized by the types of questions the books address. Many of these books were written by CIA alumni and/or regarding the CIA, but are applicable to the rest of the Intelligence Community as well.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK IN THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY?

Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy*, 4th edition, Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009, 350 pp. A straightforward account of the role of the Intelligence Community in national security affairs by the former

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO RUN THE CIA?

William Colby and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978, 493 pp. Colby conducted behind the lines operations as one of the World War II Office of Strategic Service (OSS) Jedburghs before engaging in a sterling career with the Agency, which included stints as Chief of the East Asia Division, Director of Operations, and Director of Central Intelligence (DCI).

Allen Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence*, New York: Harper and Row, 1963, 277 pp. This was the first memoir by a major Agency officer, providing an excellent historical background, particularly on key counterespionage issues.

Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996, 604 pp. Gates is the only DCI to come up through the analytical ranks.

Richard Helms with William Hood, *A Look Over My Shoulder: A Life in the Central Intelligence Agency*, New York: Random House, 2003, 478 pp. The author has a wonderful flair for the bon mot. The memoir gives the reader a good grasp for the high politics of running the Directorate of Operations and the Agency. He was not in the field for much of his career but rather ran large organizations with integrity.

George J. Tenet with William Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*, New York: HarperCollins, 2007, 549 pp. Unlike other DCI memoirs, which tend to cover entire careers, Tenet concentrates on the big issues of policymakers, mostly during the Bush years, rather than dwelling on what it was like to run the Agency.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK IN THE NATIONAL CLANDESTINE SERVICE? — MEMOIRS BY OPERATIONS OFFICERS

Robert Baer, *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism*, New York: Crown, 2002, 284 pp. Baer's other books are similarly popular among students. Also see Robert Baer and Dayna Baer, *The Company We Keep: A Husband-and-Wife True-Life Spy Story*, New York: Crown, 2011, 320 pp., their memoir on how home life is affected by balancing Agency careers.

Milt Bearden and James Risen, *The Main Enemy: The Inside*

Story of the CIA's Final Showdown with the KGB, New York: Random House, 2003, 506 pp. Unlike most memoirs, this one has an overarching theme of how the Cold War played out. While Bearden includes personal reminiscences, he focuses on how the Agency's operations affected global geopolitics. He covers "sticks and bricks" tradecraft in the Soviet Bloc, and paramilitary operational discussion regarding the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Duane R. Clarridge, *A Spy for All Seasons: My Life in the CIA*, New York: Scribner, 1996, 430 pp. Clarridge's discussions of his first tours give a flavor of the level responsibility that even young officers have overseas.

Tom Gilligan, *CIA Life: 10,000 Days with the Agency*, Guilford, Connecticut: Foreign Intelligence Press, 1991, 285 pp. In addition to details of an operational career, Gilligan includes life as a recruiter on campuses.

Richard Holm, *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA*, London: St. Ermin's Press, 2003, 462 pp., updated as *The Craft We Chose: My Life in the CIA*, Mountain Lake Press, 2011, 568 pp. Holm is a great role model for his courage, operational savvy, and just plain decency. He gives a feeling for how one's life experiences are shaped by an overseas career, and how that career influences family life.

James Olson, *Fair Play: The Moral Dilemmas of Spying*, Washington, DC: Potomac, 2006, 291 pp. If you have time to read only one book about the CIA, this is the one. Olson poses 50 scenarios, covering false flags, renditions, cover, human rights, covert actions, etc., to scholars, practitioners, journalists, activists, and others from a variety of political inclinations and experiences, asking for their views on the issues. He also includes an Intelligence 101 introduction to espionage tradecraft.

Floyd L. Paseman, *A Spy's Journey: A CIA Memoir*, St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2004, 287 pp. The book tends to be episodic but covers a sterling career that included positions as Chief of Station, Division Chief, and professor.

Ted Shackley with Richard A. Finney, *Spymaster: My Life in the CIA*, Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2005, 309 pp. Shackley gives one of the most readable accounts of covert influence strategy and techniques available anywhere outside the classified realm.

As of this writing, the memoir of Jose Rodriguez, former Director of the National Clandestine Service, is still in draft. Rodriguez is being assisted in the draft by Bill Harlow, former Director of Public Affairs at the CIA, who assisted George Tenet with his memoir.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK IN THE NATIONAL CLANDESTINE SERVICE? —JOURNALIST/ ACADEMIC ACCOUNTS

Clarence Ashley, *CIA Spymaster*, Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, 2004, 350 pp. A former Directorate of Intelligence analyst examines the career of Russian immigrant George Kisevalter, a legendary Agency officer

who ran the Popov and Penkovskiy cases.

Ted Gup, *The Book of Honor: Covert Lives and Classified Deaths at the CIA*, New York: Doubleday, 2000, 390 pp. Gup tracked down the stories of several deceased Agency officers whose names were not officially listed in the Book because of cover or family preference.

Ronald Kessler, *CIA at War: Inside the Secret Campaign Against Terror*, New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003, 378 pp. and *Inside the CIA*, New York: Pocket, 1994, 400 pp. *CIA at War* updates *Inside*. Kessler describes the Agency's overall mission and structure and some of its key leaders in the 1990s. It also offers a rare look at the work of Collection Management Officers (then called Reports and Requirements Officers).

Joseph Persico, *Casey: The Lives and Secrets of William J. Casey: From the OSS to the CIA*, New York: Viking, 1909, 601 pp. Students are also attracted to Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987, 543 pp. Persico offers a more classical biography of Casey, and spends some time debunking Woodward's deathbed story.

Jerrold L. Schecter and Peter Deriabin, *The Spy Who Saved the World: How a Soviet Colonel Changed the Course of the Cold War*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992, 488 pp. This is the definitive study of the Penkovskiy case delving into the initial concerns about his bona fides.

Benjamin Weiser, *A Secret Life: The Polish Officer, His Covert Mission, and the Price He Paid to Save His Country*, New York: Public Affairs, 2004, 383 pp. A companion definitive study of Ryszard Kuklinski, who spied for CIA for eleven years, and how Collection Management Officers prepare very detailed questions for assets and protect sources.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A FEMALE CASE OFFICER?

Melissa Boyle Mahle, *Denial and Deception: An Insider's View of the CIA from Iran-Contra to 9/11*, New York: Nation Books, 2004, 352 pp. Her's is a balanced look at a short 15-year career that included a tour as a recruiter.

Valerie Plame Wilson, with an afterword by Laura Rozen, *Fair Game: My Life as a Spy, My Betrayal by the White House*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007, 411 pp. The book later became a motion picture. The subtitle mirrors the coverage and tone of the book. The first 100 pages cover her operational training and overseas and headquarters assignments.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK IN PARAMILITARY/COVERT ACTION?

Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, New York: Penguin, 2004, 712 pp. The former managing editor of the Washington Post offers a balanced account

of agency activities, beginning where the Bearden book ends and ending where Schroen begins.

Gary Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan*, New York: Ballantine, 2005, 379 pp. While going out the door to retirement, Schroen was invited to lead the Agency's efforts to re-contact and reconstitute the Northern Alliance after 9/11. He and a small team of Agency officers funded Alliance contacts, provided targeting information for US military operations, and began the Afghan portion of the War on Terror.

Gary Berntsen and Ralph Pezzullo, *Jawbreaker: The Attack on Bin Laden and al Qaeda: A Personal Account by the CIA's Key Field Commander*, New York: Crown, 2005, 328 pp. Berntsen followed Schroen as chief of the Agency's Afghan operations; students often read these books in sequence.

George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History*, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003, 550 pp. A rollicking look at heroes in the halls of Congress and halls of the Agency, later made into a major motion picture starring Tom Hanks.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A CIA INTELLIGENCE ANALYST?

Anonymous (Michael Scheuer), *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*, Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2004, 314 pp. Scheuer served in the Agency for two decades including running Alec Station, the CIA Counterterrorism Center's unit focused on Osama bin Laden. This gives an example of how analytical tradecraft can be used in targeting terrorists.

Susan Hasler, *Intelligence: A Novel of the CIA*, Thomas Dunne Books, 2010, 320 pp. A former Directorate of Intelligence analyst and DCI speechwriter offers a dead-on satire of life as an analyst.

Richards J. Heuer, Jr., *The Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2007, 210 pp. A classic in the field of how mindsets and biases filter data.

Roger Z. George and James Bruce, eds., *Analyzing Intelligence: Origins, Obstacles, and Innovations*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008, 340 pp. Essays by practitioners on the craft of analysis.

Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush*, New York: Harper Perennial, 1995, 688 pp. A scholarly examination of the roller coaster of relations between Presidents and the CIA.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK IN THE DIRECTORATE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY?

Antonio J. Mendez with Malcolm McConnell, *The Master of Disguise: My Secret Life in the CIA*, New York: Perennial, 1999, 351 pp. How members of the disguise team operate, including the story of rescuing six Americans trapped during the takeover of the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979. Readers also consult Antonio and Jonna Mendez with Bruce Henderson, *Spy Dust: Two Masters of Disguise Reveal the Tools and Operations That Helped Win the Cold War*, New York: Atria Books, 2002, 306 pp., in which Tony and his wife, Jonna, provide more accomplishments of the Office of Technical Services.

Robert Wallace and H. Keith Melton with Henry R. Schlesinger, *Spycraft: The Secret History of the CIA's Spys, from Communism to Al-Qaeda*, New York: Plume, 2009, 576 pp. Wallace served as Director of the Office of Technical Services in the Agency's Directorate of Science and Technology; Melton is a well-known espionage historian and collector of espionage paraphernalia. This is the definitive history of Agency gadgetry.

Jeffrey T. Richelson, *The Wizards of Langley: Inside the CIA's Directorate of Science and Technology*, Boulder: Westview, 2001, 416 pp. This is a balanced history of the Directorate, ranging from micro-technology to large satellite systems.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK IN THE DIRECTORATE OF SUPPORT?

Richard G. Irwin, KH601: *And Ye Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make You Free: My Life in the Central Intelligence Agency*, Virginia: Fortis, 2010, 372 pp. Irwin chronicles his path from a junior security officer to a senior executive in the Intelligence Community.

John F. Sullivan, *Of Spies and Lies: A CIA Lie Detector Remembers Vietnam*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002, 250 pp. and *Gatekeeper: Memoirs of a CIA Polygraph Examiner*, Washington, DC: Potomac, 2007, 273 pp. These books go a long way in humanizing the person on the other side of the box and demystifying the polygraph process.

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING WILL I GET?

Lindsay Moran, *Blowing my Cover: My Life as a CIA Spy*, New York: GP Putnam's, 2005, 297 pp. A breezy tale, entertainingly told, but ultimately readers tend to ignore it as not serious-minded.

Claire Berlinski, *Loose Lips: A Novel*, New York: Ballantine, 2004, 272 pp. Another entertaining bit of humor, told in the form of a novel. She spends more time than Moran on non-paramilitary aspects of the training. She also

says she never served in the Agency.

TJ Waters, *Class 11: Inside the CIA's First Post-9/11 Spy Class*, New York: Dutton, 2006, 320 pp. Despite a wealth of factual errors, this is the best of the three recent books on Agency training.

WHAT ARE THE COUNTERINTELLIGENCE ISSUES?

Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, Basic Books, 2000, 700 pp. and its second volume Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for The Third World*, Basic Books, 2005, 678 pp. Mitrokhin was a KGB archivist who smuggled out extensive files on hundreds of Soviet spy cases.

Tennent H. Bagley, *Spy Wars: Moles, Mysteries, and Deadly Games*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, 313 pp. A survey of cases from the Cold War, including a detailed defense of the “Nosenko was a plant” position of legendary CIA counterintelligence chief, James Angleton.

ARE ANY WORKS OF FICTION ACCURATE?

David Ignatius, *Blood Money: A Novel of Espionage*, New York: WW Norton, 2011, 372 pp.; *The Increment*, New York: WW Norton, 2010, 390 pp.; *Body of Lies*, New York: WW Norton, 2007, 349 pp.; *Agents of Innocence*, New York: WW Norton, 1987, 444 pp.; *SIRO*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991, 464 pp.; and *A Firing Offense*, New York: Ivy, 1997, 366 pp. Ignatius, former foreign editor and now frequent Middle East op-ed writer for *The Washington Post*, has written a series of widely praised spy thrillers. *Body of Lies* became a major 2008 motion picture, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Russell Crowe.

Robert Littell, *The Company: A Novel of the CIA*, New York: Overlook, 2002, 894 pp. A multigenerational CIA spy thriller, set principally in the Cold War, which became a TNT television miniseries in 2007.

Francine Mathews, *Blown*, New York: Bantam, 2005, 325 pp.; and *Cutout*, New York: Bantam, 2001, 511 pp. Mathews is a former CIA intelligence analyst whose DO heroine battles terrorists while trying to save her case officer husband.

ARE THERE ANY HUMOROUS TREATMENTS OF INTELLIGENCE?

Roger Hall, *You're Stepping on My Cloak and Dagger*, Naval Institute Press reprint, 2004, 220 pp. A look at espionage during World War II.

Thomas Sileo, *CIA Humor*, Alexandria, Virginia: Washington House, 2004, 101 pp. A former senior Agency officer offers amusing anecdotes from his career.

Ed Mickolus, *The Secret Book of CIA Humor*, Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican, 2011, 240 pp. A collection of jokes, practical jokes, pranks, and urban legends from throughout the Intelligence Community, but mostly from the CIA. 🦅

Edward F. Mickolus, PhD, served for 33 years with



CIA as an analyst, operations officer, manager, recruiter, and public affairs officer. He is the author of 21 books and scores of scholarly journal articles on intelligence, international terrorism, international organizations, African politics, psychology, law, education, and humor.

Al Qaeda isn't a person or a group—it is an ideology. "...this conflict is going to be going on for a very long time on some level. Much of the world is plagued by runaway population growth, falling water tables, disease, weak governmental institutions and abject poverty. Those are conditions which are going to keep fueling fanaticism of all types for decades to come. We need to accept that and put together a mechanism for fighting these kinds of conflicts, which can be sustained indefinitely."

"...any place on the globe with a significant Muslim population and a weak, ineffectual government is a potential breeding ground. Bangladesh, Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria, the new Libya all are potentially new fronts in this war."

— Charles Faddis in *Home Security Today* as quoted by Anthony Kimery "After Awlaki - Having eliminated a key leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, counterterrorism authorities are seeking the organization's remaining operatives—in the American homeland." 1/27/2012. <http://www.hstoday.us/industry-news/general/single-article/after-awlaki/8f2090f3bd5c12bbc7de49ddd902f2d.html>