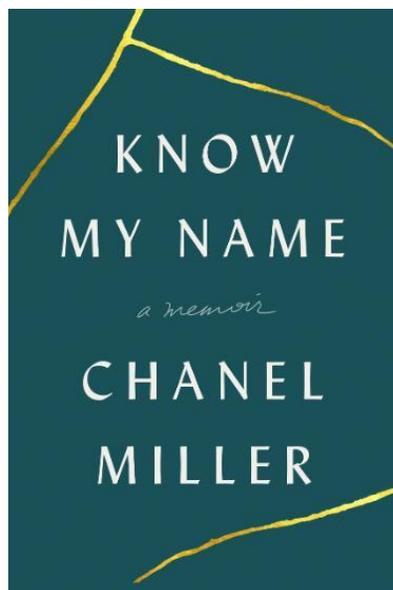


Common Text Reading Guide, Fall 2022

Chanel Miller, *Know My Name*



By now, you should have received a copy of Chanel Miller's book, *Know My Name*. If you are a new student to Seattle University this fall and have not gotten one, please send us an email at Core@seattleu.edu.

We look forward to engaging with *Know My Name* by Chanel Miller as a university community in 2022-2023. The nation came to know Miller, the survivor of a sexual assault on the Stanford University campus, when she shared her victim impact statement under the pseudonym Emily Doe. In *Know My Name*, Miller reclaims her identity as a writer, artist, and cultural critic. Her recounting of her experience preparing for trial can also inspire conversations in disciplines including nursing and the health sciences, women and gender studies, forensics and criminal justice, psychology, and law. Chanel's identity as a Chinese-American woman with an immigrant parent connects to both [2021's Common Text, Jose Antonio Vargas's *Dear America*](#) as well as to recent events surrounding COVID-19 and violence against the Asian American community.

During the selection process, the Common Text committee noted the theme of resilience in *Know My Name*: "It holds the tension of pain and hope, without making the focus on getting through trauma, but rather understanding what it takes to live through it and thrive." Chanel Miller shares her story of trauma and healing, and in the process, invites us not only to interrogate the structures that face victims of assault, but to step up and fight alongside her. This is a necessary conversation, not only for Seattle University but for our national culture.

We understand that Miller's personal and unflinching account of her experience and recovery may be difficult for some readers. Please put your own wellness first, and please reach out to family, friends and your support system.

If you or someone close to you has been personally affected by sexual violence, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, stalking, or sexual harassment, this site is designed to guide you to knowledgeable campus and community resources: [Get Help | Seattle University](#)

All enrolled students have access to **TimelyCare**, a 24/7 medical and mental telehealth resource: [TimelyCare | Wellness and Health Promotion | Seattle University](#)

Before You Arrive on Campus

We hope that you will read Miller's work carefully and thoughtfully. Below are some initial questions to consider, in addition to the reading guide at the end of the book.

- "To deny my messiness would be to deny my humanity," Chanel Miller writes (p. 67). During the court proceedings as well as in discussion of the case online, her choices and character are picked apart. The fact that she has a boyfriend helps. Her use of alcohol is used against her. Meanwhile, Brock Turner is described mainly in terms of his accomplishments. "Bad qualities can hide inside a good person," Miller reminds us (194). How do gender, race, and class play a role in how Chanel and Brock are seen in the court of law and the media?

- Who is Chanel Miller as a whole person? What empowers her? What various aspects of your identity empower you, especially in difficult times? What makes you resilient? Art, writing, comedy, and close relationships were all things that provided support to Chanel. What outlets or communities help you or have you used to help others?
- “It had never occurred to me that the system itself could be wrong, could be changed or improved,” Miller writes (139). There are numerous examples of how the system harmed Miller, as well as evidence of the ripple effects—the impact on Chanel’s family and loved ones is clear, especially during the sentencing. At the beginning of Chapter 13, Chanel observes a stark difference between the judge in her case and the judge in the Larry Nassar case in terms of allowing time for victim impact statements. What would a victim-centered system look like? What could justice look like in cases like Chanel’s?
- Chanel Miller not only experienced this sexual assault, she was on the University of California Santa Barbara campus when Elliot Rodger killed six people in a misogynist terror attack. She fears retribution from Brock Turner. She also grapples with cat-callers in Rhode Island and takes several approaches to dealing with them though none feel right. The Swedes, the exchange students who confronted Turner, are also male. How does their expression of masculinity differ? How do we shift from a culture of gender-based violence to a culture where we aim to #BeTheSwede? How do we develop the courage in ourselves and in others to speak up or take action in situations of harm as the Swedes did?
- Chanel’s relationship with her sister is particularly poignant. She is protective, strong and empathetic for her little sister in ways that she cannot be for herself sometimes. Do you have a relationship like this? How can it be helpful? Does it allow you to give yourself more strength and grace by picturing that person in your shoes instead? Can it be harmful too? Is that role of protector preventing from asking for help and healing?
- The comments sections of the initial articles about her case have such a negative impact on Chanel’s wellbeing, but after her victim impact statement goes viral, the outpouring of support is incredibly powerful. Chanel has both given something to and received something from other survivors. Have you seen or experienced how “the comments section” and social media can work in both positive and negative ways? How do we build community and support online? How do our own contributions on social media impact others?
- This book raises themes that involve both intensely personal ideas (our own traumas, experiences, fears) and important public policy concerns (education, gender bias, victim support and criminal justice). You’ll do more of that at Seattle University. How do you bring your full self to those discussions, engaging with both your intellect and your heart? What role should our personal experiences have in policy discussions? How can we inform our feelings with data and logic? How can we infuse care for the whole person into policy decisions?

Welcome to Seattle University!

We are excited to announce that Chanel Miller will be joining us virtually for New Student Convocation on September 19. Immediately following the convocation, students will be invited to select from a variety of opportunities to engage with the book and its themes, including small-group book discussions, gathering spaces for specific identity groups, faculty presentations, hands-on workshops, reflection and meditation, and physical activities. Your Orientation Leaders will share more information on how to sign up for these sessions.