Bucks Book Group lineup for Spring 2010

When: 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. (see dates below)

Where: Rollins Center Quiet Study Room, next to the Fireside Lounge at Bucks County Community College, Newtown Campus, 275 Swamp Road.

Who: All are welcome to share your thoughts and questions about any or all of the selections.

Cancellation: For snow or bad weather information, call 215-968-8000. On the radio, the College code for snow closing is 2760.

For more information, call 215-968-8164 or send email to: hennesse@bucks.edu

(Click title links to go to Amazon.com.)

Jan 14: The Land of Green Plums by Herta Müller and Michael Hofmann

Amazon.com Review:

Like the narrator of her novel The Land of Green Plums, Herta Muller grew up a German minority in Ceausescu's Romania, which she eventually left to settle in Germany. Her own experience lends credibility to the voice of her young narrator, who inhabits a deprived police state in which minorities such as the ethnic Germans suffer persecution beyond the quotidian oppressions of Ceausescu's regime. The title refers to the young woman's observations of the swaggering policemen who wolf down plums from the city trees, even while they're still green; the act serves as a symbol of greed, arbitrary power, and stupidity. Although an element of the story is survival, achieved by clinging to the German culture and language, the novel also confronts the older characters' sympathy with the Nazis. Nevertheless, Muller's fictional heroine finds salvation, as she herself did, in modern Germany.

Feb 11: The Help by Kathryn Stockett

From Publishers Weekly:

Starred Review. What perfect timing for this optimistic, uplifting debut novel (and maiden publication of Amy Einhorn's new imprint) set during the nascent civil rights movement in Jackson, Miss., where black women were trusted to raise white children but not to polish the household silver. Eugenia Skeeter Phelan is just home from college in 1962, and, anxious to become a writer, is advised to hone her chops by writing about what disturbs you. The budding social activist begins to
collect the stories of the black women on whom the country club sets relies and mistrusts enlisting
the help of Aibileen, a maid who's raised 17 children, and Aibileen's best friend Minny, who's found
herself unemployed more than a few times after mouthing off to her white employers. The book
Skeeter puts together based on their stories is scathing and shocking, bringing pride and hope to the
black community, while giving Skeeter the courage to break down her personal boundaries and
pursue her dreams. Assured and layered, full of heart and history, this one has bestseller written all
over it. (Feb.)

Mar 11: Spooner by Pete Dexter

Amazon.com Review:
Amazon Best of the Month, October 2009: Warren Spooner is a sad sack. His mother despises him
as the surviving twin from a hideously painful delivery. He's not very smart, and his one redeeming
talent--baseball--is nullified by catastrophic injury. He gets into trouble, a lot. Though he manages to
organize his life through marriage and a (terrible) job, the self-destructive behavior endures.
Fortunately, Pete Dexter--winner of the National Book Award for Paris Trout--provides a calming
figure in his step-father, Calmer Ottosson, a man with his own life of promise and disappointment,
as well as inexhaustible patience for his wayward ward. Plot's not Dexter's focus--the story ambles
through a series of monstrous vignettes projected through unblinking eyes, to the point where the
awfulness becomes hilarious and absurd (e.g. a burial at sea gone horribly wrong, complete with
erotic misunderstandings). It's like reading Garrison Keillor through a glass of blood: relentlessly
dark, yet ultimately affirming. --Jon Foro

Apr 8: A Dream in Polar Fog by Yuri Rytkheu and Ilona Yazhbin Chavasse

From Publishers Weekly:
Siberian-born author Rytkheu chronicles a Canadian sailor's life among the Chukchi people of
northeastern Siberia in a lyrical, instructional novel that reads like an adventure story wrapped
around an ethnography. When ice traps John MacLennan's ship in the Bering Strait in 1910, not far
from a Chukchi settlement, the youthful, naïve sailor, trying to widen a small fissure in the ice with
dynamite, blows up his hands. His captain hires several Chukchi men to take him by dogsled to a
Russian doctor—a long, arduous journey—and vows that the ship will wait for his safe return. But
when gangrene sets in, John's hands must be amputated by a medicine woman, and when strong
winds break the ice shelf mooring the Belinda, the ship sails without him. The rest of the novel
details John's integration into the Chukchi world: adapting to his handicap, adopting Chukchi ways
and finding friendship—and love—among his hosts. Even John's role in the tragic, accidental death
of his best friend, Toko, only pulls him deeper into the community's folds. Rytkheu's clear,
compassionate prose ("Winter days resemble one another like twins") ably evokes a foreign, fragile
world. (Apr.)
Amazon.com Review:

**Amazon Best of the Month, June 2009:** Colum McCann has worked some exquisite magic with *Let the Great World Spin*, conjuring a novel of electromagnetic force that defies gravity. It's August of 1974, a summer "hot and serious and full of death and betrayal," and Watergate and the Vietnam War make the world feel precarious. A stunned hush pauses the cacophonous universe of New York City as a man on a cable walks (repeatedly) between World Trade Center towers. This extraordinary, real-life feat by French funambulist Philippe Petit becomes the touchstone for stories that briefly submerge you in ten varied and intense lives--a street priest, heroin-addicted hookers, mothers mourning sons lost in war, young artists, a Park Avenue judge. All their lives are ordinary and unforgettable, overlapping at the edges, occasionally converging. And when they coalesce in the final pages, the moment hums with such grace that its memory might tighten your throat weeks later. You might find yourself paused, considering the universe of lives one city contains in any slice of time, each of us a singular world, sometimes passing close enough to touch or collide, to birth a new generation or kill it, sending out ripples, leaving residue, an imprint, marking each other, our city, the very air--compassionately or callously, unable to see all the damage we do or heal. And most of us stumbling, just trying not to trip, or step in something awful.

But then someone does something extraordinary, like dancing on a cable strung 110 stories in the air, or imagining a magnificent novel that lifts us up for a sky-scraping, dizzy glimpse of something greater: the sordid grandeur of this whirling world, "bigger than its buildings, bigger than its inhabitants." --Mari Malcolm

**June 10:** TBA