Hosted by the IAC Women for Energy Efficiency (WE²) Network

Participants are expected to follow the WE² Network’s official Code of Conduct for Virtual Meetings and Discussions, as this program is intended to help facilitate a space for safe and inclusive discussion on topics surrounding gender diversity in the engineering and energy efficiency work forces.

Who can join?

Anyone affiliated with the IAC Program or connected to our WE² LinkedIn page. MALE ALLIES WELCOME.

How it works?

1. A book will be selected and announced quarterly from our ever-growing suggested reading list.
2. A virtual discussion will be hosted over Zoom or other video call service 2 to 3 months after the book is selected. (Summer event scheduling may differ.)
3. Moderators will be prepared with questions, quotes, or audio clips (from the audiobook format) to prompt discussions on relevant themes and memorable moments in the book.
4. Participants are encouraged to come with questions/topics of their own. (We encourage bookmarks.)
5. The conversation is encouraged to become an open discussion format. The book is only a launching point, so even people who did not read/finish the book are encouraged to attend.
6. Members will be added to a Slack.com workspace for continued discussion between events.
7. Events will not be recorded.
How can I participate if money is tight?

There are some free options to consider. First off, library access is always a plus. It should be relatively easy to get a library card. Libby is an excellent FREE app that allows you to borrow ebooks and audiobooks from your local county library remotely. There are also a few low-cost audiobook services you can create an account for such as Audible and Libro.fm, both of which give you the first month free. If you are struggling with the cost of books, please contact WE² Program organizers so we can work something out. (If cost ends up being an issue for a lot of participants, we can intentionally pick books that have been out for longer to increase likelihood of them being available at your local and school libraries.)

What kind of books are on the reading list?

It is an intentional mixture of genres. We will alternate between book genres and writing styles on the list. The books are chosen for their themes on gender, diversity in STEM and the workforce, advancing technology, energy crisis, women in leadership, intersectionality and identity, and other important topics for women in energy and engineering fields. Skip to WE² Reading List.

Why include works of science fiction and fantasy on the reading list?

As engineers and other members of the STEM community, it is important for us to recognize the impact science fiction has had and continues to have in the advancement of technology. Engineers, especially women and minority engineers, have a responsibility to think about how individuals and society interacts with this technology. Furthermore, much speculative fiction is not actually a prediction of the future but actually about the society of today. Science fiction has the power to allow us to explore the themes being discussed in through a different lens – or new world – so as to help strip away our unconscious biases that otherwise still exist in other formats.

“The purpose of a thought-experiment, as the term was used by Schrödinger and other physicists, is not to predict the future - indeed Schrödinger most famous thought experiment goes to show that the "future," on the quantum level, cannot be predicted - but to describe reality, the present world.

“Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive.”

- Ursula K. Le Guin, The Left Hand of Darkness

Can I start reading today?

Feel free to use the WE² list as your personal reading list. We will be continuing to add to it periodically and will not be able to get to every book. Additionally, some books share themes and may be relevant in discussions for other books. That being said, make sure you have a way to jog your memory if that book later is chosen for discussion.

Can I submit a book to be added to the list?

YES, PLEASE SUBMIT BOOK SUGGESTIONS TO THE WE² PROGRAM TEAM. You can also bring them up at book discussion events. However, the final decision to add a book to the official list will be left up to the WE² program managers.
Books are listed in no particular order. The list will be expanded continually and is subject to change.

**Becoming**  
*Parable of the Sower* – Second Book – Discussion January 2021

**The Left Hand of Darkness**

**The Confidence Code**

**Technically Wrong**

**Eloquent Rage**

**Red Mars**

*The Alchemy of Us* – Third Book – Discussion March 2021 (Women’s History Month)

**The Circle**

**Designing Your Life**

**Prime Meridian**

**The Memo**

**The Bridge Called My Back**

**Bossypants**

**The Power of Habit**

**The Pearl that Broke the Shell**

**Shrill**

**Silent Spring**

*Good Morning, Midnight* – Current Book / Fourth Book – Discussion May 2021

**Artemis**

**Lab Girl**

**Lean In** – First Book – Discussion October 2020

See Following pages for more information on each book.
Becoming
Author: Michelle Obama
Genre: Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Feminism
46,867 reviews
In a life filled with meaning and accomplishment, Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerizing storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her—from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world’s most famous address. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she describes her triumphs and her disappointments, both public and private, telling her full story as she has lived it—in her own words and on her own terms. Warm, wise, and revelatory, Becoming is the deeply personal reckoning of a woman of soul and substance who has steadily defied expectations—and whose story inspires us to do the same.

Parable of the Sower (Earthseed #1)
Author: Octavia E. Butler
Genre: Fiction, Science-fiction/Fantasy, Dystopian
5,939 reviews
In 2025, Lauren Olamina and her family live in one of the only safe neighborhoods remaining on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Behind the walls of their defended enclave, Lauren’s father, a preacher, and a handful of other citizens try to salvage what remains of a culture that has been destroyed by drugs, disease, war, and chronic water shortages. Lauren struggles with hyperempathy, a condition that makes her extraordinarily sensitive to the pain of others. When fire destroys their compound, Lauren’s family is killed and she is forced out into a world that is fraught with danger. With a handful of other refugees, Lauren must make her way north to safety, along the way conceiving a revolutionary idea that may mean salvation for all mankind.

The Left Hand of Darkness (Hainish Cycle #4)
Author: Ursula K. Le Guin
Genre: Fiction, Classic Science-fiction, Speculative fiction, Gender, Feminism
8,874 reviews
A groundbreaking work of science fiction published in 1969, The Left Hand of Darkness tells the story of a lone human emissary to Winter, an alien world whose inhabitants can choose - and change - their gender. His goal is to facilitate Winter's inclusion in a growing intergalactic civilization. But to do so he must bridge the gulf between his own views and those of the completely dissimilar culture that he encounters. Embracing the aspects of psychology, society, and human emotion on an alien world, The Left Hand of Darkness stands as a landmark achievement in the annals of intellectual science fiction. This book is often cited as the first to explore the idea of an androgynous culture, and the series itself is cited as the creation of “ansible,” the concept of instantaneous interstellar communication.
The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self-Assurance – What Women Should Know
Authors: Katty Kay, Claire Shipman
Genre: Nonfiction, Self-Help, Leadership, Business, Psychology
912 reviews
Following the success of Lean In and Why Women Should Rule the World, the authors of the bestselling Womenomics provide an informative and practical guide to understanding the importance of confidence—and learning how to achieve it—for women of all ages and at all stages of their career. Working women today are better educated and more well qualified than ever before. Yet men still predominate in the corporate world. In The Confidence Code, Claire Shipman and Katty Kay argue that the key reason is confidence. Combining cutting-edge research in genetics, gender, behavior, and cognition—with examples from their own lives and those of other successful women in politics, media, and business—Kay and Shipman go beyond admonishing women to "lean in." Instead, they offer the inspiration and practical advice women need to close the gap and achieve the careers they want and deserve.

Technically Wrong: Sexist Apps, Biased Algorithms, and Other Threats of Toxic Tech
Author: Sara Wachter-Boettcher
Genre: Nonfiction, Technology, Feminism
239 reviews
Buying groceries, tracking our health, finding a date: whatever we want to do, odds are that we can now do it online. But few of us realize just how many oversights, biases, and downright ethical nightmares are baked inside the tech products we use every day. It’s time we change that. In Technically Wrong, Sara Wachter-Boettcher demystifies the tech industry, leaving those of us on the other side of the screen better prepared to make informed choices about the services we use—and to demand more from the companies behind them.

Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower
Author: Brittney Cooper
Genre: Nonfiction, Memoir, Intersectional Feminism, Race
(recommended on audiobook)
1,051 reviews
Far too often, Black women’s anger has been caricatured into an ugly and destructive force that threatens the civility and social fabric of American democracy. But Cooper shows us that there is more to the story than that. Eloquent rage keeps us all honest and accountable. It reminds women that they don’t have to settle for less. When Cooper learned of her grandmother's eloquent rage about love, sex, and marriage in an epic and hilarious front-porch confrontation, her life was changed. And it took another intervention, this time staged by one of her homegirls, to turn Brittney into the fierce feminist she is today. This book argues that ultimately feminism, friendship, and faith in one’s own superpowers are all we really need to turn things right side up again.
Red Mars (Mars Trilogy #1)
Author: Kim Stanley Robinson
Genre: Fiction, Hard Science-fiction, Space, Technology
3,263 reviews
For eons, sandstorms have swept the desolate landscape. For centuries, Mars has beckoned humans to conquer its hostile climate. Now, in 2026, a group of 100 colonists is about to fulfill that destiny. John Boone, Maya Toitavna, Frank Chalmers & Arkady Bogdanov lead a terraforming mission. For some, Mars will become a passion driving them to daring acts of courage & madness. For others it offers an opportunity to strip the planet of its riches. For the genetic alchemists, it presents a chance to create a biomedical miracle, a breakthrough that could change all we know about life & death. The colonists orbit giant satellite mirrors to reflect light to the surface. Black dust sprinkled on the polar caps will capture warmth. Massive tunnels, kilometers deep, will be drilled into the mantle to create stupendous vents of hot gases. Against this backdrop of epic upheaval, rivalries, loves & friendships will form & fall to pieces--for there are those who will fight to the death to prevent Mars from ever being changed.

The Alchemy of Us: How Humans and Matter Transformed One Another
Author: Ainissa Ramirez
Genre: Nonfiction, Science, History, Technology
37 reviews
In The Alchemy of Us, scientist and science writer Ainissa Ramirez examines eight inventions--clocks, steel rails, copper communication cables, photographic film, light bulbs, hard disks, scientific labware, and silicon chips--and reveals how they shaped the human experience. Ramirez tells the stories of the woman who sold time, the inventor who inspired Edison, and the hotheaded undertaker whose invention pointed the way to the computer. She describes, among other things, how our pursuit of precision in timepieces changed how we sleep; how the railroad helped commercialize Christmas; how the necessary brevity of the telegram influenced Hemingway's writing style; and how a young chemist exposed the use of Polaroid's cameras to create passbooks to track black citizens in apartheid South Africa. These fascinating and inspiring stories offer new perspectives on our relationships with technologies.

The Circle
Author: Dave Eggers
Genre: Fiction, Science-fiction, Thriller, Technology
23,030 reviews
This sci-fi thriller opens when Mae Holland is hired to work for the most important tech company in the world, The Circle. But what seems too good to be true turns out to be just that. As she rises in the ranks at The Circle, she simultaneously uncovers the dark underbelly of privacy, knowledge, and information tangled up in tech. Not only does The Circle capture the Silicon Valley zeitgeist, but it illuminates the unique challenges for the women at the top.
Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life
Author: Bill Burnett
Genre: Nonfiction, Self-Help, Productivity
1,054 reviews
Whether we’re 20, 40, 60 or older, many of us are still looking for an answer to that perennial question, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ In Designing Your Life, Silicon Valley design innovators Bill Burnett and Dave Evans use their expertise to help you work out what you want – and how to get it. Using real-life stories and proven techniques like reframing, prototyping and mind-mapping, you will learn how to build your way forwards, step-by-positive-step, to a life that’s better by a design of your own making. Because a well-designed life means a life well-lived.

Prime Meridian
Author: Silvia Moreno-García
Genre: Fiction, Science-Fiction, Speculative Fiction, Space
141 reviews
Love, life, dreams, and a world beyond reach. Amelia dreams of Mars. The Mars of the movies and the imagination, an endless bastion of opportunities for a colonist with some guts. But she’s trapped in Mexico City, enduring the drudgery of an unkind metropolis, working as a rent-a-friend, selling her blood to old folks with money who hope to rejuvenate themselves with it, enacting a fractured love story. And yet there’s Mars, at the edge of the silver screen, of life. It awaits her.

The Memo: What Women of Color Need to Know to Secure a Seat at the Table
Author: Minda Harts
Genre: Nonfiction, Self-Help, Business, Intersectional Feminism, Race
100 reviews
From microaggressions to the wage gap, The Memo empowers women of color with actionable advice on challenges and offers a clear path to success. Most business books provide a one-size-fits-all approach to career advice that overlooks the unique barriers that women of color face. In The Memo, Minda Harts offers a much-needed career guide tailored specifically for women of color. Drawing on knowledge gained from her past career as a fundraising consultant to top colleges across the country, Harts now brings her powerhouse entrepreneurial experience as CEO of The Memo to the page. With wit and candor, she acknowledges "ugly truths" that keep women of color from having a seat at the table in corporate America. Providing straight talk on how to navigate networking, office politics, and money, while showing how to make real change to the system, The Memo offers support and long-overdue advice on how women of color can succeed in their careers.
This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color
Authors: Cherríe L. Moraga (Editor), Gloria E. Anzaldúa (Editor), Toni Cade Bambara (Foreward)
Genre: Nonfiction, Essays, Feminism, Race, Gender

This groundbreaking collection reflects an uncompromised definition of feminism by women of color. Through personal essays, criticism, interviews, testimonials, poetry, and visual art, the collection explores, as coeditor Cherríe Moraga writes, “the complex confluence of identities—race, class, gender, and sexuality—systemic to women of color oppression and liberation.”

Bossypants
Author: Tina Fey
Genre: Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Humor, Feminism, Leadership (recommended on audiobook)

Before Liz Lemon, before "Weekend Update," before "Sarah Palin," Tina Fey was just a young girl with a dream: a recurring stress dream that she was being chased through a local airport by her middle-school gym teacher. She also had a dream that one day she would be a comedian on TV. From her youthful days as a vicious nerd to her tour of duty on Saturday Night Live; from her passionately halfhearted pursuit of physical beauty to her life as a mother eating things off the floor; from her one-sided college romance to her nearly fatal honeymoon—from the beginning of this paragraph to this final sentence. Tina Fey reveals all, and proves what we've all suspected: you're no one until someone calls you bossy.

The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business
Author: Charles Duhigg (Goodreads Author)
Genre: Nonfiction, Self-Help, Psychology, Business, Productivity, Leadership

In The Power of Habit, award-winning New York Times business reporter Charles Duhigg takes us to the thrilling edge of scientific discoveries that explain why habits exist and how they can be changed. Along the way we learn why some people and companies struggle to change, despite years of trying, while others seem to remake themselves overnight. We visit laboratories where neuroscientists explore how habits work and where, exactly, they reside in our brains. We discover how the right habits were crucial to the success of Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, and civil-rights hero Martin Luther King, Jr. At its core, The Power of Habit contains an exhilarating argument: The key to exercising regularly, losing weight, raising exceptional children, becoming more productive, building revolutionary companies and social movements, and achieving success is understanding how habits work. Habits aren’t destiny. As Charles Duhigg shows, by harnessing this new science, we can transform our businesses, our communities, and our lives.
The Pearl That Broke Its Shell  
Author: Nadia Hashimi  
Genre: Fiction, Historical Fiction  
3,871 reviews  
In Kabul, 2007, with a drug-addicted father and no brothers, Rahima and her sisters can only sporadically attend school, and can rarely leave the house. Their only hope lies in the ancient custom of bacha posh, which allows young Rahima to dress and be treated as a boy until she is of marriageable age. As a son, she can attend school, go to the market, and chaperone her older sisters. But Rahima is not the first in her family to adopt this unusual custom. A century earlier, her great-aunt, Shekiba, left orphaned by an epidemic, saved herself and built a new life the same way. Crisscrossing in time, The Pearl That Broke Its Shell interweaves the tales of these two women separated by a century who share similar destinies. But what will happen once Rahima is of marriageable age? Will Shekiba always live as a man? And if Rahima cannot adapt to life as a bride, how will she survive?

Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman  
Author: Lindy West  
Genre: Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Feminism, Essays, Humor  
(recommended on audiobook)  
5,461 reviews  
From a painfully shy childhood in which she tried, unsuccessfully, to hide her big body and even bigger opinions; to her public war with stand-up comedians over rape jokes; to her struggle to convince herself, and then the world, that fat people have value; to her accidental activism and never-ending battle royale with Internet trolls, Lindy narrates her life with a blend of humor and pathos that manages to make a trip to the abortion clinic funny and wring tears out of a story about diarrhea. With inimitable good humor, vulnerability, and boundless charm, Lindy boldly shares how to survive in a world where not all stories are created equal and not all bodies are treated with equal respect, and how to weather hatred, loneliness, harassment, and loss--and walk away laughing. Shrill provocatively dissects what it means to become self-aware the hard way, to go from wanting to be silent and invisible to earning a living defending the silenced in all caps.

Silent Spring  
Author: Rachel Carson  
Genre: Nonfiction, Environmentalism, Science and Technology  
2,212 reviews  
Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring was first published in three serialized excerpts in the New Yorker in June of 1962. The book appeared in September of that year and the outcry that followed its publication forced the banning of DDT and spurred revolutionary changes in the laws affecting our air, land, and water. Carson’s passionate concern for the future of our planet reverberated powerfully throughout the world, and her eloquent book was instrumental in launching the environmental movement. It is without question one of the landmark books of the twentieth century.
Good Morning, Midnight
Author: Lily Brooks-Dalton,
Genre: Fiction, Science-fiction, Space, Thriller
2,214 reviews
(Netflix movie The Midnight Sky, Staring George Clooney)
Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring was first published in three serialized excerpts in the New Yorker in June of 1962. The book appeared in September of that year and the outcry that followed its publication forced the banning of DDT and spurred revolutionary changes in the laws affecting our air, land, and water. Carson’s passionate concern for the future of our planet reverberated powerfully throughout the world, and her eloquent book was instrumental in launching the environmental movement. It is without question one of the landmark books of the twentieth century.

Artemis
Author: Andy Weir,
Genre: Fiction, Science-fiction, Space, Technology and Manufacturing
20,919 reviews
(Audiobook narrated by Rosario Dawson)
Life on Artemis, the first and only city on the moon, is tough if you’re not a rich tourist or an eccentric billionaire. So smuggling in the occasional harmless bit of contraband barely counts, right? Not when you’ve got debts to pay and your job as a porter barely covers the rent. Everything changes when Jazz sees the chance to commit the perfect crime, with a reward too lucrative to turn down. But pulling off the impossible is just the start of her problems, as she learns that she’s stepped square into a conspiracy for control of Artemis itself—and that now, her only chance at survival lies in a gambit even riskier than the first.

Lab Girl
Author: Hope Jahren,
Genre: Nonfiction, Memoir, Science
7,661 reviews
Acclaimed scientist Hope Jahren has built three laboratories in which she’s studied trees, flowers, seeds, and soil. Her first book is a revelatory treatise on plant life—but it is also so much more. Lab Girl is a book about work, love, and the mountains that can be moved when those two things come together. It is told through Jahren’s stories: about her childhood in rural Minnesota with an uncompromising mother and a father who encouraged hours of play in his classroom’s labs; about how she found a sanctuary in science, and learned to perform lab work done “with both the heart and the hands”; and about the inevitable disappointments, but also the triumphs and exhilarating discoveries, of scientific work. Yet at the core of this book is the story of a relationship Jahren forged with a brilliant, wounded man named Bill, who becomes her lab partner and best friend.
Renata Ghali believed in Lee Suh-Mi’s vision of a world far beyond Earth, calling to humanity. A planet promising to reveal the truth about our place in the cosmos, untainted by overpopulation, pollution, and war. Ren believed in that vision enough to give up everything to follow Suh-Mi into the unknown. More than twenty-two years have passed since Ren and the rest of the faithful braved the starry abyss and established a colony at the base of an enigmatic alien structure where Suh-Mi has since resided, alone. All that time, Ren has worked hard as the colony’s 3-D printer engineer, creating the tools necessary for human survival in an alien environment, and harboring a devastating secret.

Hidden Figures
Author: Margot Lee Shetterly,
Genre: Nonfiction, History, Space, Technology
8,872 reviews
Before Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a group of professionals worked as ‘Human Computers’, calculating the flight paths that would enable these historic achievements. Among these were a coterie of bright, talented African-American women. Segregated from their white counterparts, these ‘coloured computers’ used pencil and paper to write the equations that would launch rockets and astronauts, into space. Moving from World War II through NASA’s golden age, touching on the civil rights era, the Space Race, the Cold War and the women’s rights movement, ‘Hidden Figures’ interweaves a rich history of mankind’s greatest adventure with the intimate stories of five courageous women whose work forever changed the world.

Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead
Authors: Sheryl Sandberg, Nell Scovell (Co-Writer)
Genre: Nonfiction, Business, Feminism, Leadership, Self-Help
12,910 reviews
Sheryl Sandberg’s Lean In is a massive cultural phenomenon and its title has become an instant catchphrase for empowering women. Ask most women whether they have the right to equality at work and the answer will be a resounding yes, but ask the same women whether they’d feel confident asking for a raise, a promotion, or equal pay, and some reticence creeps in. The statistics, although an improvement on previous decades, are certainly not in women’s favour – of 197 heads of state, only twenty-two are women. Women hold just 20 percent of seats in parliaments globally, and in the world of big business, a meagre eighteen of the Fortune 500 CEOs are women. In Lean In, Sheryl Sandberg – Facebook COO and one of Fortune magazine’s Most Powerful Women in Business – draws on her own experience of working in some of the world’s most successful businesses and looks at what women can do to help themselves, and make the small changes in their life that can effect change on a more universal scale.