

As a member of the Goucher Community, you will have many opportunities to discuss and explore your own identity, to explore the ways in which race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic status, and many other markers of identity affect levels of privilege and access to power, and to develop skills in communicating across difference in the classroom and beyond. The First Year Summer Read is your first step in what will be a four-year exploration of Race, Power, and Perspective – a central component of the Goucher Commons Curriculum and an expression of the social justice commitments of Goucher College.

Goucher College First Year Reading Assignment
Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions
Valeria Luiselli

Answer in writing sections I. & II. For section III. choose three out of the six questions to answer them in writing. Bring your typed responses to orientation in August.

- I. A note on reading this book: this short book has a point of view and in many ways is *about* point of view. As you are reading, note:
 1. The author’s biographical information as presented within her essays;
 2. Historical information as presented by the author;
 3. Second-person reporting (about someone else, as told to the author by that person) presented by the author.

- II. Think about how you analyze and emotionally process the information that the author presents to you.
 1. Are there specific aspects of your own biography, knowledge of history, or second-hand personal knowledge that correlate with or contradict what the author has to say? Mark those specific passages for future reference in our discussions of this book, so that you can refer to detail about Valeria Luiselli’s point of view.
 2. Also write down your own point of view as you come to understand it while reading this book. How will you talk about *Tell Me How It Ends* with others who have various points of view based on their own biographies, historical understandings, and stories from friends and family?

- III. Additional questions to guide your reading:
 1. There are many examples where Luiselli notes the different language choices we have to describe the same events or people, and the way those language choices frame how we think about what we are describing. Find examples of alternative language choices that are meaningful to you and explore how the language used

matters. Some examples: thinking about people as war refugees or as illegal aliens; thinking about the crisis at the border of the U.S. and Mexico as an immigration crisis or as a refugee crisis; thinking about history as a country's history or as hemispheric history; thinking about a college class as a migration think tank or as a Spanish conversation class.

2. The overall frame for this collection of essays is the question/request: Tell Me How It Ends—the title of the book. This is the question, Luiselli says, her daughter often asks her about the stories of the children Luiselli interviews. Sometimes, she says, she makes up a happy ending to tell her daughter, but often she says “I don’t know how it ends yet” (p. 90). Why does Luiselli use this question to frame her collection of essays?
3. Luiselli says, “There are things that can only be understood retrospectively, when many years have passed and the story has ended. In the meantime, while the story continues, the only thing to do is tell it over and over again as it develops, bifurcates, knots around itself. And it must be told, because before anything can be understood, it has to be narrated many times, in many different words and from many different angles, by many different minds” (pp. 96-97). Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
4. If you or your family immigrated to this country, how would you answer the question “why did you come to this country”? And if you were born in this country, how would you answer the question (that you are not asked in order to stay or have citizenship), “why are you staying in this country?”
5. As a reader, do you feel hopeful when Luiselli’s students at Hofstra University decide to create a political student organization? Why or why not?
6. How do you imagine the ending to the larger story of the children unaccompanied by parent or guardian who arrive at the U.S. southern border desiring to enter the country—the children different people refer to as undocumented immigrants/war refugees/illegal aliens? What would you say if asked, “tell me how it ends”?