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John Williams: A Hollywood Composer Biography

Martin Valladares, Humphreys College Business Student

Born and raised in New York City, New York, John Williams was the son of a percussionist for the CBS radio orchestra. In turn, Williams was exposed to music at a very young age. After learning how to play the piano as a child, Williams moved on to learning how to play wind instruments such as the trumpet, trombone, and clarinet (John Williams Web Pages). Once Williams matured into a teenager, he began to orchestrate his own musical pieces. During his college years, Williams and his family moved to Los Angeles, where he studied musical composition privately and briefly at the University of California, Los Angeles (John Williams Web Pages). Even after Williams was drafted into the United States Air Force, he arranged band music and began conducting during his service. It was after leaving the Air Force in 1954 that Williams went back east and attended the Juilliard School of Music. Williams would go on to study piano and work as a jazz pianist in New York City. After performing for both clubs and recordings, he returned to California. This was the period in Williams's life where he began to work for Hollywood.



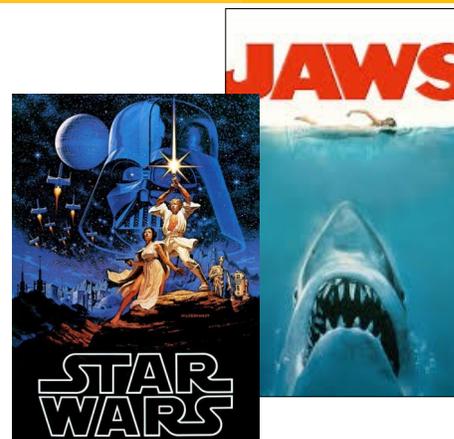
In 2013, Disney and Lucasfilm announced the new Star Wars movies. It was expected that John Williams, the original composer for the previous Star Wars films would make his return to Hollywood. Soon, he agreed. After the success of Star Wars VII (2015), Williams will go on to produce music for the upcoming Star Wars VIII and IX.

Once Williams became a Hollywood studio pianist, he would go on to work on classic films such as *Some Like It Hot*, *West Side Story*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lynch). Also, during that time, Williams composed music for different television shows such as *Wagon Train* and *Gilligan's Island* (Wheeler). During the 1970s, Williams began to make a name for himself by being a composer for big-budget disaster films such as *The Poseidon Adventure* (Lynch). It was during this time that he would meet and begin to work with someone whom Williams would continue to work with throughout his entire career: Steven Spielberg. When Williams and Spielberg first met, Spielberg was still an aspiring director. Spielberg asked Williams to score his first feature film, *The Sugarland Express* (Wheeler). This event sparked a decades-long partnership. Williams would go on to score many of Spielberg's best-known films. These films include the shark attack thriller *Jaws*, science fiction films such as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, and the action-adventure *Indiana Jones* series. Williams would also go on to score Spielberg's other films such as *Jurassic Park* and its sequel, holocaust biopic *Schindler's List*, and the war drama *Saving Private Ryan* (Wheeler). However, one of the most iconic and memorable music pieces that Williams has ever composed would be the theme songs for all six *Star Wars* films.

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Even after Williams made a name for himself as a talented Hollywood composer, he still composed music for other musical mediums. For example, at his heart, Williams was still a concert composer and conductor. He would continue to compose symphonies and concertos for various instruments (Ankeny). During the 1980s, Williams became the conductor of the Boston Pops, touring the country and recording extensively (John Williams Web Pages). Besides original material, the Boston Pops would also perform live renditions of Williams' popular film scores. Also, he would compose concert pieces and themes for several Olympic Games (Ankeny).



Officially, John Williams "retired" during 1993. However, He would still be active within the music scene. For example, Williams was honored as the laureate conductor for the Boston Pops, which means that the even though the Boston Pops toured with a different conductor, the orchestra would still consult Williams on musical matters. Williams would also guest conduct for orchestras such as the London Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic (John Williams Web Pages). Also, in 2009, Williams composed and arranged a song for the inauguration ceremony of United States President Barack Obama (Ankeny).

Throughout his career, Williams received many honors and awards for his works. For example, He was nominated for more than 45 Academy Awards, of which he won five. Williams also received three Emmy Awards as well as 20 Grammy Awards (Ankeny). In 2009, for his achievements in symphonic music for motion pictures, Williams was awarded the National Medal of Arts (Ankeny); it is considered to be the highest award given to an artist by the United States government.

Williams' musical pieces have touched and inspired many generations of both music and film enthusiasts. What makes Williams' works unique is the compositions and arrangement of the notes. Just from playing the first three notes of the Jaws theme and people can immediately pick up where the song is from. The theme song Williams made for all the Star Wars films really set the mood and style of the movies. Even though Williams is officially "retired," he is still consulted for future projects, such as the upcoming Star Wars film (Allegri). He has left a definitive mark not only within Hollywood, but also on music composition itself.

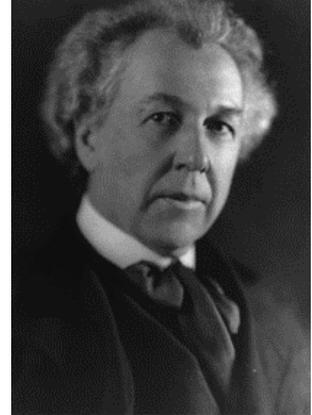
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Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater

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American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) changed the face of architecture. At the beginning of his career in the late 1800s, American architecture was influenced by European designs ranging from medieval to then-current French styles (Wilkinson 6). As he progressed through the 20th century, from his low horizontal prairie houses for wealthy clients, to modest Usonian homes for middle-class families in the 1930s and impressive mid-century masterpieces like the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, American architecture was influenced by him. Wright introduced the concept of “organic architecture,” a philosophy incorporating the idea that a building would become integrated as part of a landscape. As stated in his 1957 television interview with Mike Wallace, “I would like to have architecture that belonged where you see it standing, and as a grace to the landscape instead of a disgrace.” Of his many outstanding achievements, Fallingwater, at Bear Run, Pennsylvania remains his best known and possibly his greatest creation.



In the 1930s, Wright built Fallingwater for Edgar Kaufmann, the owner of Pittsburgh's biggest department store. Wright needed that commission to help re-build his stalled career. Personal scandals and money problems had caused him to start a fellowship program for apprentices at Taliesin in Wisconsin to keep his studio afloat. Edgar Kaufmann's son, Edgar, Jr. was a student of Wright's and inspired the connection between his parents and the architect (Hinman).

Kaufmann simply wanted Wright to build him a vacation home where his family had enjoyed swimming in the stream and the view of the crashing waterfall on his secluded property at Bear Run, sixty miles southeast of Pittsburgh. After a visit to the property in December 1934, Wright was impressed by the “pervasive sound and rhythm of the whitewater” (Levine 4). His vision of the house did not include a view of the falls as Kaufmann assumed; Wright pictured the home as a part of the landscape built over the waterfall with the stream running below it. Wright's philosophy of organic architecture “incorporated the sound of the falls into his design in such a way that it is difficult to discern where the landscape ends and the house begins” (Hinman). According to Neil

Levine, Wright chose the name Fallingwater “to describe the programmatic identity and dynamic relationship between the building and site” (7).

Fallingwater has been described as “gravity-defying” (Levine 9). This illusion is achieved by the use of cantilevered levels of terraces that extend up to 20 feet above the stream. The main floor is anchored to a boulder and supported by concrete and masonry walls.

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The cream-colored terraces above the main floor give the home the horizontal and organic feel that is present in Wright's designs. Wright used horizontal images again and again in both the interior and exterior of the home. The cantilevered terraces, roofs, and stone walls mimic the sandstone bluffs of the surrounding landscape, along with interior features like the grain of the wood used in cabinetry and wardrobes and built-in linear seating in the long, open living room (Hinman).

Fallingwater's living room continues to bring the surroundings indoors. The water of the stream below inspired the high polish of the living room floor. The boulder on which the house rests extends upwards through the floor, providing seating for the fireplace. Steel frames encase the large windows, which open out into the landscape to eliminate the corners and provide an unobstructed view. Although the sounds of the falls fill the living room, there is no view of the water except through an innovative glass hatch that opens to allow access to a stairway leading to the stream below. Wright insisted on access to the stream from the living room in order to align the house with the water, bringing in "cool air, moisture, the music of the stream" (Hinman).

Wright's cantilevered design was innovative and controversial. He had designed cantilevered buildings previously, but each level of Fallingwater was supported in a way that had not been attempted before. Kaufmann was skeptical of Wright's design and had his own engineers give their opinions on the plans, which angered Wright immensely. The contractor's resulting deviation from Wright's plans and additional reinforcing of the terraces caused the living room floor to sag over time (Levine 8). Wright had been correct in his engineering. In the 1990s, the additional weight eventually required the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to make extensive repairs costing \$4.5 million to save the floor of Fallingwater from collapse (Hinman).



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Fallingwater was completed in the spring of 1937. From 1938 to 1955 the Kaufmanns enjoyed the house and entertained many friends and family members in their weekend retreat (Hinman). The Kaufmann family donated the house to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in 1963. More than 150,000 tourists visit Frank Lloyd Wright's most famous home each year (Hinman, Levine 1, 2). A structure that was considered unbuildable by many and mocked by some, launched the second half of Wright's career and changed American architecture forever. Fallingwater remains his legacy and the best example of organic architecture in America.

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FROM THE NEW BOOKS

Jason Stanley. *How Propaganda Works.* Princeton University Press, 2016 (paperback)

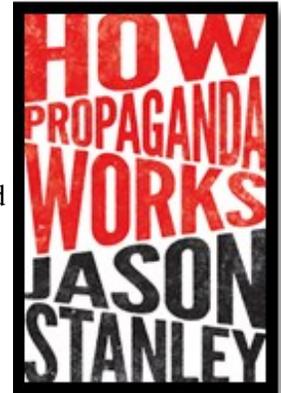
Jason Stanley is a professor of philosophy at Yale University. He is the author of *Knowledge and Practical Interests*, *Language in Context*, and *Know How*. In his latest book, he is focused on "political rhetoric; 'propaganda'... If philosophy has 'core' topics, rhetoric is among them. Both Plato and Aristotle wrote treatises on political rhetoric, the subject of this book..."

The book is divided into seven chapters. They define the concept of propaganda and outline its roles in the history of political thought. Stanley focuses on the language of propaganda in liberal democracies as a "mechanism of control." The closing chapters explore the concept of ideology in general and political ideologies in particular.

Stanley stresses that his book is not "a manual of propaganda. Instead, [he] explain[s] what it is, why it matters, and the mechanism by which it is effective." He argues that "harmful propaganda relies upon the existence of flawed ideologies present in a given society... Understanding what propaganda is and the mechanism that makes it effective is an essential task for understanding political reality."

The author demonstrates that propaganda deserves more attention. He examines how it operates subtly, how it undermines democracy—particularly the ideals of democratic deliberation and equality—and how it has damaged democracies of the past.

The book won the 2016 PROSE Award in Philosophy by the Association of American Publishers. It might be a good supplementary reading for several Humphreys' courses, including *American Institutions*, *Introduction to Philosophy*, and *The American Presidency*.

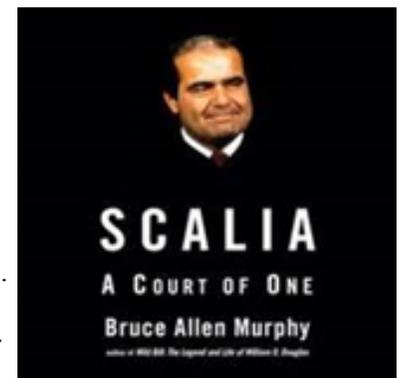


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**Bruce Allen Murphy.** *Scalia: A Court of One.* Simon & Schuster, 2015

Bruce Allen Murphy is a judicial biographer and scholar of American Constitutional Law and Politics. He is the Fred Morgan Kirby Professor of Civil Rights at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania.

His latest book is the compelling story of one of the most polarizing figures to serve on the Supreme Court. The author shows how Antonin Scalia changed the legal landscape through his theories of textualism and originalism, interpreting the meaning of the Constitution's words as he claimed they were understood at the end of the 1700s. Scalia's judicial conservatism is informed as much by his traditional Catholicism and political partisanship as by his reading of the Constitution; his speeches, public appearances, and interviews have made him a lightning rod for controversy. The book on Scalia is an insightful analysis of the Supreme Court and its influence on American life over the past quarter century.



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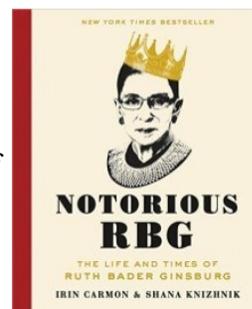
Antonin Scalia was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in 1982. In 1986, he successfully outmaneuvered the more senior Robert Bork to be appointed to the Supreme Court.

Scalia's February 2016 death left the highest court split 4-4 between its "conservative" and "liberal" members. It led to the immediate ideological conflict between the Republicans in Congress and President Barack Obama, who announced that he would nominate Scalia's successor in "due time," regardless of the ongoing presidential election campaign. These events make the scholarly book on the legacy of the late Justice Scalia highly topical.



**Irin Carmon and Shana Knizhnik. *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*. Dey Street Books, 2015**

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg never asked for fame. However, nearly a half-century into her career, something unexpected happened to her: she won the popularity. Much of that iconic status is attributed to a Tumblr called "Notorious R.B.G." Enraged by the Supreme Court ruling in 2012 that gutted the Voting Rights Act, Shana Knizhnik created an online tribute for the dissenter in that case, Justice Ginsburg. The "Notorious R.B.G." Tumblr took off. *The* Tumblr amused the justice herself.

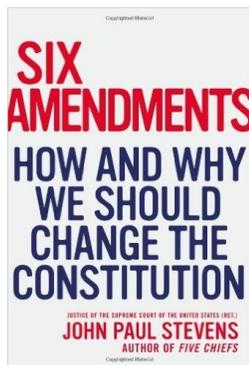


According to NPR's Nina Totenberg, Justice Ginsburg laughingly explained in an interview that one of her law clerks told her about it. The clerk, she added, "also explained to me what 'Notorious R.B.G.' was a parody... Well, my grandchildren love it, and I try to keep abreast of what's on the Tumblr." (The Tumblr title is a reference to the late 300-pound rapper Notorious B.I.G., known as "Biggie," whose lyrics are raunchy enough that it's hard to find a printable line.)

The book draws on intimate access to Ginsburg's family members, close friends, colleagues, and clerks, as well as an interview with the Justice Ginsburg herself. An original hybrid of reported narrative, annotated dissents, rare archival photos and documents, and illustrations, the book tells a story of an unusual and transformative woman who transcends generational divides.



**John Paul Stevens. *Six Amendments: How and Why We Should Change the Constitution*. Little, Brown and Company, 2014**



John Paul Stevens served as a judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit from 1970 to 1975. After Justice William O. Douglas retired in 1975, Stevens was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Gerald R. Ford, winning unanimous approval by the Senate. Although he was expected to serve as a conservative counterbalance to the remnants of the liberal Court of Earl Warren, Stevens proved to be an independently minded justice who occupied a moderately liberal position.

By the time of his retirement in 2010, Stevens was the third longest-serving justice in the history of the Supreme Court. He was involved with many of the defining decisions of the modern era, to offer a unique book.

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*Six Amendments* is detailing six specific ways in which the Constitution should be amended in order to protect the safety and wellbeing of American citizens: to reduce gun violence, limit political campaign spending, challenge the death penalty, limit states' independence, and make Congress less combative and ideological.

Written with the same precision and elegance that made Stevens's own Court opinions legendary for their clarity as well as logic, his latest book is a remarkable work, both because of its unprecedented nature and, in an age of partisan ferocity, its common sense.



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