



THE NEWSLETTER OF
The HUMANIST ASSOCIATION
of CONNECTICUT



AHA Chapter

March 2016

UU Humanists Local Group

Why Darwin Matters

Reminder: We now start our monthly meetings with coffee and conversation at 7:00 p.m. followed by our main monthly presentation at 7:30 p.m.

Join us on Monday, March 21, in the Unitarian Society of New Haven (USNH) Social Hall to celebrate Darwin Day with a fascinating talk by guest speaker: Lawrence Rifkin, M.D.

Lawrence Rifkin is a physician and a writer. He blogs for *The Huffington Post* and *Scientific American*. His writings on the intersection of science, humanism, and ideas have been published in *Free Inquiry*, *Skeptical Inquirer*, *The Humanist*, and *Medical Economics*, in which he was the Grand Prize Winner of the Doctors' Writing Contest. Larry recently took trips to South America and Africa, in which he attempted to recreate Darwin's observations and thought process.

Larry will discuss the central role of Darwin and his ideas to any modern person who cares about how things really are in the world, and cares about the ways our lives and actions matter. He will discuss Darwin's dramatic adventures, and how our modern understanding of evolution impacts ethics, the environment,

Calendar of Events

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are held at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden, CT. RSVP for dinners at meetup.com/cthumanist.

MARCH 2016

Sat., 5	Conversations: The Path Between the Seas	2:30 p.m.
Mon., 7	Social Dinner at Turkish Kebab House, 1157 Campbell Ave., West Haven. (203) 933-0002	7:00 p.m.
Sat., 19	Book Discussion: <i>Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End</i> by Atul Gawande	2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Mon., 21	Monthly Meeting Main program: Lawrence Rifkin, M.D., <i>Why Darwin Matters</i>	7:00 p.m. 7:30 p.m.
Sun., 27	Board meeting	2:00 p.m.

APRIL 2016

Mon., 4	Social Dinner at Turkish Kebab House, 1157 Campbell Ave., West Haven. (203) 933-0002	7:00 p.m.
Sat., 9	Conversations: Program TBA.	2:30 p.m.
Sat., 16	Book Discussion: <i>Nature's God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic</i> by Matthew Stewart	2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Mon., 18	Monthly Meeting Main program: TBA	7:00 p.m. 7:30 p.m.
Sat., 23	Outing to Peabody Museum	
Sun., 24	Board meeting	2:00 p.m.

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society, and our understanding of our place in the modern world.

We'll start with half an hour of coffee and conversation at the new time of 7:00 p.m. Our main talk will follow brief announcements at 7:30 p.m.

Board Meetings

As of March we will be holding our board meetings 30 minutes earlier than our traditional time, at 2:00 p.m. on the Sunday after the monthly meeting.

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Humanist Conversations: The Path Between the Seas

Join us on Saturday, March 5, 2015 at 2:30 p.m. in the library at 700 Hartford Turnpike in Hamden.

As the quest for the Northwest Passage as a trade route to the east failed in the late nineteenth century, the need grew stronger, and it became clear that a route through Central America was the answer. The historian David McCullough tells the story in this documentary about the conception and construction of the Panama Canal. The myriad issues that confronted this undertaking, and almost caused its doom are the subject of this meeting.

The documentary is about an hour long and refreshments will be served.

Yale Humanist Community March Events

These Humanist Haven events are held at 1:00 p.m. at the Grove, 760 Chapel Street in New Haven.

March 6: Grace Patterson — Compassion is Not a Zero Sum Game

We often feel an instinctual sympathy for the plight of others—and a corresponding desire to alleviate their suffering. But what do we do with that sympathy? How do we reconcile it with feeling overwhelmed by the ills of the world? How much of ourselves can we in good conscience give to people who suffer on the other side of the planet, when there is so much to do in our own communities? Is it even responsible to try to intervene in injustice happening so far away? These questions are some of the defining struggles of our generation. Activist Grace Patterson will argue that we can start to answer them by doubling down on the compassion that spurs them.

Grace Patterson is a nontheist, a Unitarian Universalist, and a committed interfaith advocate and writer. As the Director of Programming for World Faith, she supports religiously diverse teams of young people around the world who are working to end religious violence and global poverty. As the Director of Operations for Mean Communications, she works with interfaith organizations to help craft and execute communications strategies that will compel others to join, create, and do. She has written about all this and more for *Mic.com*, *State of Formation*, and extensively in her own personal journal.

March 20: Simran Jeet Singh — The Saint-Soldier: What Humanists Can Learn from the Sikh Tradition

A number of religious traditions consider the world to be illusory in some way, encouraging individuals to detach themselves from their surroundings or await a more perfect world after death. The Sikh tradition largely takes a different approach, encouraging Sikhs to be balanced and engaged on all levels, including the spiritual, social, physical, and political. Scholar and activist Simran Jeet Singh will offer an opportunity to learn more about Sikhism, exploring how this worldview impacts the ways in which Sikhs live their lives and interact with the world around them. This discussion will also touch on how the Sikh tradition reconciles diversity and embraces pluralism, two key features for building healthy communities in our modern world.

Simran Jeet Singh is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion at Trinity University and Senior Religion Fellow for the Sikh Coalition. He earned his Ph.D. from the Department of Religion at Columbia University, a Masters degree from Harvard University, and his Bachelor of Arts from Trinity University. He currently serves as a Truman National Security Fellow, and speaks and writes frequently on issues relating to religion and culture.

Reason Rally 2016

The second Reason Rally will be held at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, from Thursday, June 2, to Sunday, June 5. The main event will be held on Saturday, June 4.

One of the Rally's sponsors is the Secular Coalition for America, which will hold its annual Lobby Day training on Thursday, June 2, 2016. Lobby Day participants will have a chance to meet their congressional representatives on Friday, June 3.

For more information, and to book tickets for the Rally, see <http://reasonrally.org/>.

Outings, Starting in April

Rebecca Williams is excited to announce that we will be adding outings to our list of monthly activities. First up is a self-guided tour of the Peabody Museum's *Fossil Fragments: Riddle of Human Origins* currently planned for April 23. We'll then stop somewhere and have an afternoon snack. Museum admission is \$13 and the afternoon snack will be separate checks. For more information, including carpooling, feel free to contact Rebecca at development@cthumanist.org or at (203) 900-4221.

Upcoming plans include a tour of Grove Cemetery, the oldest incorporated cemetery in the USA, a trip to the Yale Center for British Art which is re-opening in May, and more. Watch these pages and our web presence for details!

Book Discussion: "Being Mortal"

Our book for March is *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* by Dr. Atul Gawande. The discussion will take place Saturday, March 19, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. in the library of the Unitarian Society of New Haven at 700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden.

Book description from amazon.com:

[I]n the inevitable condition of aging and death, the goals of medicine seem too frequently to run counter to the interest of the human spirit. Nursing homes, preoccupied with safety, pin patients into railed beds and wheelchairs. Hospitals isolate the dying, checking for vital signs long after the goals of cure have become moot. Doctors, committed to extending life, continue to carry out devastating procedures that in the end extends suffering.

Dr. Gawande, a practicing surgeon, addresses his profession's ultimate limitation, arguing that quality of life is the desired goal for patients and families. Gawande offers examples of freer, more socially fulfilling models for assisting the infirm and dependent elderly, and he explores the varieties of hospice care to demonstrate that a person's last weeks or months may be rich and dignified.

"Being Mortal, Atul Gawande's masterful exploration of aging, death, and the medical profession's mishandling of both, is his best and most personal book yet." — *Boston Globe*

The book made the New York Times Best Seller List.

As we are in winter, snow date for this discussion is Saturday, March 26. Watch for announcements if there is inclement weather on or near the discussion date.

The book is readily available in numerous libraries around the state.

Refreshments will be served.

CARE Conference: April 2 at the Mark Twain House!

The Connecticut Assembly for Reason and Ethics (CARE) 2016 will be held at the Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, Connecticut on Saturday, April 2, 2016 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Speakers include: Hemant Mehta (the "Friendly Atheist"), Amanda Knief (Legal and Public Policy Director at American Atheists), Wendy Thomas Russell (Author, journalist, and editor), and Jason Heap (Executive Director for the United Coalition of Reason).

A third of the available tickets have been sold already! Registration is fast and easy — just visit <https://conference.ctcor.org> and the cost of \$35 covers the morning session of speakers, lunch, and an afternoon of breakout sessions.

In order to keep the cost of the tickets so low, we've been selling sponsorships and running fundraisers. Most recently the February 20th fun and games night, graciously hosted by Rebecca & Matthew Williams with Moe Provencher generously acting as MC, raised \$130. Thank you to all who attended and donated. Additionally HAC joins most Connecticut Coalition of Reason members in purchasing a sponsorship for the conference, which includes an opportunity to spread the word about our organization at our own information table. If you would like to represent us at our information table on the day of the event, please contact Carol Siddall.

Email List

To join, send an email to:
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with the subject **subscribe**.

To unsubscribe, send an email to:
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USNH Social Cinema

On the first Friday of April, April 1, USNH social cinema at 700 Hartford Turnpike in Hamden will present the film, *Divide In Concord*. The optional potluck dinner at 6:30 p.m. will be followed by the film at 7:15 p.m.

In 1775 in Concord, Mass., patriots fired the famous “shot heard round the world” that began the American Revolution. Now follow a modern day revolution as 84 year-old Jean Hill wages war against the bottled water industry. For three years Jean has worked to rid the town of Concord of single-serve plastic water bottles. Witness the story of her controversial crusade.

Bring your returnable bottles to Social Cinema both as a donation to help support awareness of environmental issues, and as a visible statement of how much plastic we create.

For more information call 203-288-1807 or email office@usnh.org

Speaker Fund Challenge Update!

The speaker fund challenge issued by Rebecca Williams is almost over! Rebecca has offered to match up to \$250 of total donations to the speaker fund between now and the March 21 monthly meeting. To take advantage of this offer, please drop your donation in the box marked Speaker Fund at a monthly meeting, give your donation to any board member, or mail your donation to the Humanist Association of Connecticut, 27 Thornton Street, Hamden, CT 06517.

Social Dinners

Get to know fellow humanists over a tasty meal! Join us at our monthly social dinner at the Turkish Kebab House, 1157 Campbell Avenue in West Haven on Monday March 7 or April 4 at 7:00 p.m.

Thornton Street, Hamden, CT 06517-1321. Submissions and requests for permission to reprint articles should be made to this address or to editor@cthumanist.org. We welcome humanist-themed letters, articles, poetry, news items, cartoons, and illustrations.

Please include a SASE to have material returned. Approximate circulation: 180 copies. Annual subscription price \$10.00, included in membership.
The editor would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue.

<p align="center">MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>! Adult \$35</p> <p>! Family \$50</p> <p>! Newsletter Only \$10</p> <p>! Our membership year is 1/1-12/31.</p> <p>! In cases of financial hardship, the association may waive the membership fee. Please mail checks for annual membership payable to Humanist Association of Connecticut to: Humanist Association of Connecticut, 27 Thornton Street, Hamden, CT 06517-1321.</p>	<p>Name(s): _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Telephone: _____</p> <p>E-Mail Address: _____</p> <p>Please add me to the e-mail Announce List (circle one): YES NO</p> <p>I want my newsletter electronically <u>only</u> (circle one): YES NO</p> <p>Where did you hear about us? _____</p> <p>Comments: _____</p> <p>_____</p>
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