

PIQUE

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

Upcoming SHSNY Programs and Events

Weekly ZOOM Happy Hour,
Every Sunday except when we meet at the Globe. 5PM ZOOM

– See [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) for details

Topics include a wide range of timely and humanistic issues

Sunday Brunch & Conversation Sunday, April 16, 2022
Noon–2PM
The Globe Restaurant 158 E. 23rd. St., NYC

Topic: Europe, War and Enlightenment

Non-Fiction Book Club, April 7th, 7:00 PM, Via ZOOM

Book: The Tyranny of Merit

– See [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) for details

Fiction Book Club, April 13th, 7:30 PM – Online via ZOOM

Book: Rules of Civility

– See [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) for details

MARCH FOR SCIENCE, April 23rd

Link:
<https://www.marchforscience.nyc>

Why Humanism and Spring Are So Connected

Dr. David I. Orenstein

The warmth of spring will soon be approaching. On this side of the equator, it is the acknowledged time of year when we come out of our hibernation and seek various forms of human contact and renewal. For those who are religious, this renewal takes place as ritual, namely in the form of Ramadan, Easter and Passover.

But for the secular, we seek out our common humanity and connection to others and the Earth, without the need for the divine to show us the way. Certainly, in my mind this is a cleaner and healthier way to relate to each other and the cosmos without the need for mythological evidence or validation.

If you are a secularist, humanist, atheist, or other nonbeliever, then connecting with SHSNY in the springtime is the perfect time to build community. Aside from our ongoing online and in-person programs, this April we will be Marching for Science along Central Park West, joining thousands of other New Yorkers who respect, understand, and appreciate all that scientific knowledge has offered humanity.

This coming May, the SHSNY will be hosting our Annual Day of Reason program. This year we are fortunate to have Ron Millar, the Director of the Center for Freethought Equality in Washington, DC, to speak about the work of the Center and the importance of keeping the wall between church and state solidly firm, high and strong.

We must of course acknowledge that there are many parts of the world where spring will not bring peace, kindness, or justice. In Eastern Europe, the Middle East, in Africa and elsewhere, the madness of ongoing violence seeks to touch and devolve each of us. Such suffering is an anathema to what secular humanism stands for and as such we all must

Truth, Consequences, Or Something Else Altogether

By Jonathan Engel

If someone in a position of power commits terrible crimes, how important is it that that person be held accountable? If the damage can be undone, or at least minimized, is that enough if the perpetrator gets off scot-free? Such questions, are, of course, fact sensitive. Should Gerald Ford have allowed Richard Nixon to be prosecuted for his crimes? On the one hand, Ford's pardon of Nixon probably saved the country from a wrenching prosecution, and Nixon was out of office and lacked the power to commit more crimes. On the other hand, what does it do to the rule of law to allow certain people to be above it?

Which brings us to two of the worst malefactors of the 21st century, Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin. Trump, in and out of the White House, had been a one-man walking crime wave all his life, culminating in leading a conspiracy to overthrow the government of the United States. Will he and other upper level conspiracists (such as his chief of staff Mark Meadows) be prosecuted by the Justice Department for their crimes? Right now there is no indication that the actual leaders of the insurrection will pay any price for their perfidy.

Which brings us to Mr. Putin. President Biden has been criticized for branding Putin a "war criminal", but even such critics will concede that the shoe fits. (Note that Putin's response to this "slur" basically comes down to "If you don't apologize for calling me a war criminal, I'll commit even worse war crimes"). The Russian army, under Putin's direction, has targeted and killed civilians. That's a war crime. Will he be held accountable? I hope so, but I wouldn't bet on it.

Springtime (Continued)

fight against deliberate suffering while holding accountable all those who cause harm to others.

But with our feet firmly planted in NYC, we will bring hope to those through our ongoing public and private actions. This is indeed why we must remain a strong secular humanist community. Without each of us doing the applied work of our humanist conscience the world would indeed grow darker and springtime would certainly be less bright.

Goodbye COVID-19!!! Continued Success at Our In-Person Programs

We are carefully and safely bringing back in-person programming to the NYC Humanist community. At the March 2022, GLOBE more than a dozen vaccinated humanists joined in great fun, food and conversation. This month's topic will be on the current crisis



and issues facing Europe, the war in Ukraine and how the Enlightenment may have been used for oppression as well as liberation. SHSNY Board member, Dorothy Kahn, will lead the always interesting and frank discussion. This is a free program, but you pay for your own food and drinks.

Truth (Continued)

As I write this, talks between Ukraine and Russia to negotiate a cease-fire are ongoing. Like any humanist I hope they're successful, as the civilian toll of the war has become unbearable. But what happens to Putin?

In negotiations Putin is likely to get a bunch of stuff he wants, including a Ukrainian promise not to join NATO, some territory in eastern and southern Ukraine, and relief from the worst of the sanctions. And we'll all be so grateful for the break (however temporary) in the killing, that we'll be content to put the issue of Putin's crimes on the backburner. Talk about irony: the more brutal Putin acts, the greater the desire for a ceasefire, the more Putin can wring concessions in negotiations, including immunity from prosecution.

It shouldn't be this way. Putin's crimes need to be investigated, prosecuted, and if found guilty, punished. The same for Trump in this country.

Powerful people like Trump and Putin should be held to a higher standard, not a lower one. How can we even pretend to be a just civilization if we prosecute everyday crimes committed by everyday people, but we give a pass to the most powerful people in the world, who have conspired to destroy our democracy and have committed mass murder?

Since it is obviously inconceivable that all religions can be right, the most reasonable conclusion is that they are all wrong.



SHSNY Will March for Science

On April 23, 2022, please come join the SHSNY community in marching for science! This celebratory event brings together people from across the city, state, and nation. It joins people from all walks of life who appreciate and respect science and the role science and scientists play in our modern life.

Our group will be gathering near the Ethical Culture Society on CPW and West 64th Street. Wear your best pro-science shirt or carry a pro-science sign.

From the Organizers:

"Our flagship event is back on April 23, 2022! After two successful virtual Earth Day celebrations, March for Science New York City is once again taking to the streets in-person to demand science and justice in NYC! We will follow our marching route to our rally point, at which we'll end the day with a celebration of inspiring booths, speakers, workshops, and more!"

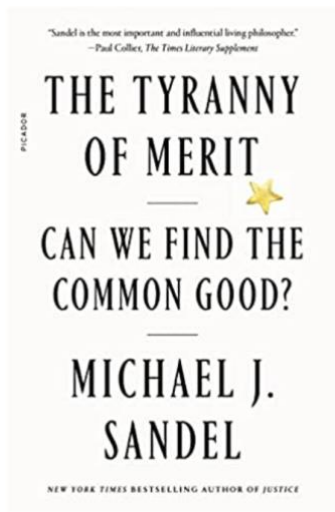


Spotlight: SHSNY Book Clubs

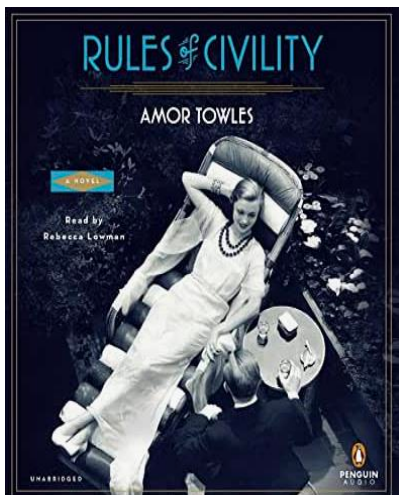
The SHSNY has two fantastic ongoing book club groups which meet monthly via Zoom.

April's book selections are:

The Non-Fiction Club Presents:



The Fiction Club Presents:



See details on SHSNY's Meetup.com page for meeting dates, times and access.

On Hobbes and Locke: The Puritan Hustle

By Dennis Middlebrooks*

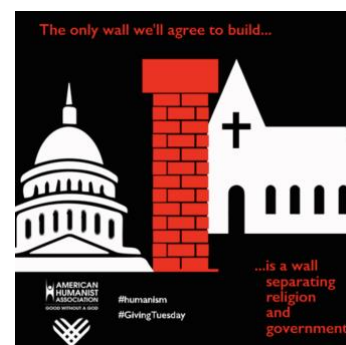
[It is suggested by some scholars that the] Puritans who came to North America rejected Thomas Hobbes' concept of a state church and embraced John Locke's concept of religious freedom.

Aside from the fact that the Puritans were well established in New England decades before John Locke's wrote anything about religious liberty, the society they created clearly looked much more to Hobbes than to Locke.

Far from allowing "a thousand churches to bloom," the Puritans established a rigid theocracy in which no creed other than their own was tolerated. The Puritans only problem with England was that the state church that Hobbes supported was not their own, but the Anglican Church.

It was Roger Williams, who had to flee Puritan Massachusetts, who embraced Locke's concept of religious freedom in the Rhode Island colony he founded. The Non-Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which Drury apparently attributes to the Puritans, was in fact a reaction to the type of intolerant state religion that the Puritans had established a century earlier."

(Editor's Note: This is an excerpt from a letter to the editor to the magazine Free Inquiry, which correctly sets the record straight on religious oppression going back hundreds of years on the North American continent)



Mark Your May 2022 Calendar: SHSNY Day of Reason Speaker and Event

The SHSNY Day of Reason speaker this year will be Ron Millar, the Director of the Center for Freethought Equality (CFE).

The CFE is an outstanding humanist organization that advocates for secularism at the state and federal level. CFE also works directly with congresspersons, supports the Congressional Freethought Caucus, and provides political contributions to those currently elected and those looking to serve the nation, who support the separation of church and state.

Mr. Millar's talk is titled, "**No Longer Invisible: Politically Empowering the Atheist and Humanist Community**" It will be a fantastic event and one you won't want to miss.

Details of the program - as to location, time and cost, are still being planned. SHSNY will be sending out a flyer and other information via email very shortly.

We hope to see you there!



Membership and Giving to SHSNY

Your membership and financial support of SHSNY goes a long way. It helps us to continue to provide fun, interesting, and thought-provoking events and programs each month and throughout the year.

To our members we pledge to always put your needs first. To those who come to our programs, we hope that you will always see SHSNY as a lighthouse for both reason and community.

The SHSNY board all serve as a group of dedicated volunteers, but we can't do it without your help. Membership and giving is simple. You can mail us a check or go to www.SHSNY.org to join. Here's a breakdown of membership options:

Membership includes a subscription to PIQUE.

Individual Membership: \$40 per year (tax deductible)

Family Membership: \$65 per year (tax deductible)

Student Membership \$20 per year (tax deductible)

Subscription to PIQUE only: \$30 per year (12 issues)

The Secular Humanist Society of New York Board

Dr. David I. Orenstein, Board President, Members: Nancy Adelman, Kevon Cameron, Jonathan Engel, Dorothy Kahn, Brian Lemaire, David Madison, Carl Marxer, Claire Miller, John Wagner

**Mailing Address: P.O. Box 7661, FDR Station,
New York, NY 10150**

Fighting for Dignity and Against the “Don’t Say Gay” Legislation

Lemme tell you a story.

I was outed at 17. A mom learned that I had a boyfriend & alerted anyone who’d listen. She howled about my “corrupting influence” & insisted that my gayness was contagious. Peers were pulled from my classes. Others stopped showing up to practice.

People were barred from seeing me. I was kicked out of church. Shunned at home. That year ended with parents protesting the school, demanding that rainbows come down — shrieking that kids like me posed a threat to their way of life. I moved away and never came back.

A threat. Contagious. Dangerous. I didn’t know it at the time, but those same insinuations had been used to dehumanize & justify discrimination against LGBTQ people forever.

They’re also the same insinuations fueling Don’t Say Gay legislation now. Accusations of a sinister plot by LGBTQ people to indoctrinate and corrupt aren’t new — they’re the oldest trope in the book. Bigots lobbed them while they tried to ban us from being teachers, serving our country, getting married, adopting children, and using the bathroom.

And those tired accusations are being wielded as weapons once again. Anyone who dares wonder aloud how the Don’t Say Gay bill may impact LGBTQ people is accused of pedophilia by the office of Florida’s governor and drown in a deluge of grotesque Twitter mentions.

Yet the Senator who filed it admitted his goal: to put a stop to the number of young people who feel comfortable enough to be themselves at a young age. To censor speech about LGBTQ people in an effort to force people to stay in the closet. To erase us.

Fighting (Continued)

So let me say what I wish *anyone* had the courage to tell me when I was labeled a dangerous, 17 year old contagion: LGBTQ people are a normal, healthy part of society who deserve to be valued and seen. That’s what we’re fighting for. And I won’t apologize for it.

Power hungry politicians & anti-LGBTQ activists will hurl tired bigotry drenched in a 2022 coat of paint. And we’ll keep doing what’s right: defending the dignity of all families and fighting for a future where every kid feels seen & loved — exactly as they are.

- Brandon Wolf in Orlando, FL (Via Twitter)

HUMANIST NEWS AND EVENTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Upcoming Conferences:

American Atheists Convention – April 14-17
Atlanta, GA

Humanist International Convention – June 3-5
Glasgow, UK

American Humanist Association – June 24-26,
Online, via Zoom

Freedom from Religion Foundation – Oct. 28-30
San Antonio, TX

NEWS HEADLINES:

Study: Women of no faith face discrimination — when they are seen at all – Religionnews.com

Judge rejects Christian school’s demand to hijack PA system for pre-game prayer – Onlysky.com

NASA’s new budget request is out. The Biden Administration proposed \$26 billion — an 8% increase over the previous year – Theplanetarysociety.com