

# PIQUE

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society of New York

## Upcoming SHSNY Programs and Events

**First Sunday & Last Sunday ZOOM Happy Hours of the Month, 5PM ZOOM**

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

Topics include a wide range of timely and humanistic issues impacting NYC, National and Global items of concern

**Sunday Brunch & Conversation Sunday,**  
September 18, 2022. Time:  
Noon–2PM, The Globe  
Restaurant,  
158 E. 23rd. St., NYC

Topic: Humanist Issues lead by  
Dorothy Kahn

**Non-Fiction Book Club,** Sept. 1st,  
7:00 PM, Via ZOOM

Book: Rules: A Short History of What  
We Live By. By Lorraine Datson

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

**Fiction Book Club,** Sept. 14,  
7:30 PM – Online via ZOOM

Book: The Hypnotist's Love Story  
by Laine Moriarity

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

## Welcome to the Fall Issue of PIQUE

Dr. David I. Orenstein

It is the hope of the SHSNY Board that all those reading the September newsletter have had a happy, safe and healthy summer. The Society was busy this summer, holding Globe meeting in-person and ZOOM programs the first and last Sunday of June, July and August as we wound through the summer months. But as fall approaches and the weather turns from hot sun to cooler breezes, we look forward to winding our way through 2022 on a hopeful and optimistic note!

The Society's Board, with your input is still working on the right mix of in-person and online events. This of course is because of the ongoing concerns with the pandemic and the connected issues of social distancing and virus control.

But we're scheduling several new and keeping our monthly and seasons annual programs, so it's important that you check your email and our website for the latest news and updates. But we are listening to your needs. That's why we decided to add an additional ZOOM happy hour at the end of the month and will continue to adapt and needs and on-the-ground issues bring new information into our planning process.

And there is much to learn and share! As politics, policy and local and world events move us forward, I am convinced that we all need humanists and the humanist perspective in our personal and community lives.

Perhaps it is my own bias, but I accept that it is science, reason, reality and each other that we must trust. Keeping our eyes wide open and ready to take action against any group or agency that might wish to harm our human and civil secular lives, or our right to live freely and secularly.

## From the AHA – Humanist Haikus

Sharpen the mind's quill  
Fill the well with ink and draw  
From experience

—Justin Hauxwell

It's not very hard.  
Common sense shows us the way.  
Love is the answer.

—Steve W

Inhabit nature  
Take hold of your destiny  
Boundless potential

—Jean Waller

World humanity  
A universe of wonders  
My adoration.

—Russell Dick

What leads to progress...  
Fantasy, faith, or prayer?  
No, people move us

—Don Sturm

Live for the moment  
And live for one another  
That's Humanism

—Justin Hauxwell

Pampas grass spreads plumes  
Across this hill. Noon sun comes.  
We feast on brilliance.

—John Laue

That is why I also think we hold humanist community with such esteem and why we seek it out. To maintain connection why we hold each other and “the system” to account. And that is why there is a SHSNY, and so many other groups like it today – to lend community and hope to each other as time moves us forward.

As I've noted before, those humanists best prepared to lead the expanding conversations are the same people in our diverse movement and community. The non-believers, humanists and secularists who fight for reason and kindness both in the present and for generations to come.

## Flashback: SHSNY Marching For Science!

Last Spring, a small band of dedicated SHSNY members and supporters came out to join hundreds of other New Yorkers in support of science, science education, the environmental movement and reason. We also proudly showed off our new SHSNY gear. The t-shirts got plenty of positive comments from the crowd.



## Some Good News

By Jonathan Engel

These are trying times for Secular Humanists, as well as anyone else who favors the rule of law, the scientific method, separation of church and state, and other humanist principles. For just one example, the Supreme Court is currently (and for the foreseeable future), stocked with religious fanatics who have already gutted reproductive health care for women, and have set their sights on marriage equality, the right to use contraceptives and other fundamental rights. Zeus knows what other 21<sup>st</sup> century rights they'll get rid of order to achieve their goal of sending us all back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But a short time ago I received a small dollop of hope that I'd like to share with you.

On Sunday August 21, I went to the SHSNY Sunday Brunch and Conversation at the Globe. Just before noon, I walked a young man and a young woman (I'd guess they were each about 20) who were looking around shyly, as if this was the first time they'd been to a SHSNY event, which indeed it was. I wanted them to feel welcome and at home, so I sat down with them to chat. I told them about SHSNY and the things we believe (and don't believe) in, including the fact that pretty much all of us are atheists.

Then I braced for their reaction. I'm from an era where stating my atheism feels like a dangerous act. Even people who are not particularly religious expect some kind of vague deity belief in others, and I've been the recipient of both shock and anger when expressing my non-theist views. Now comes the good part. These two young people were totally non-plussed by my stated atheism.

## Good News (Continued)

Maybe even more importantly, they expressed surprise that I had been concerned about how they would react to my lack of religious beliefs. People their age, they told me, have all sorts of religious (and non-religious) beliefs, and so, to them, meeting a person who is a non-believer is to be expected and is cause for neither alarm nor pre-judgment.

And that, I think, is good news

## 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](http://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)

**SHSNY Board: Dr. David Orenstein (President); Nancy Adelman, Kevon Cameron, Jonathan Engel, Dorothy Kahn, Brian Lamaire, Carl Marxer, Claire Miller, John Wagner**

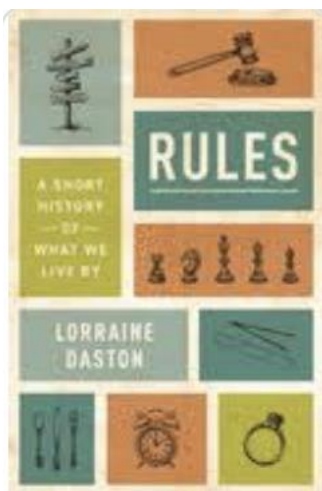
**Mailing Address: SHSNY, P.O. Box 7661, FDR Station,  
New York, NY 10150**

## Spotlight: SHSNY Book Clubs

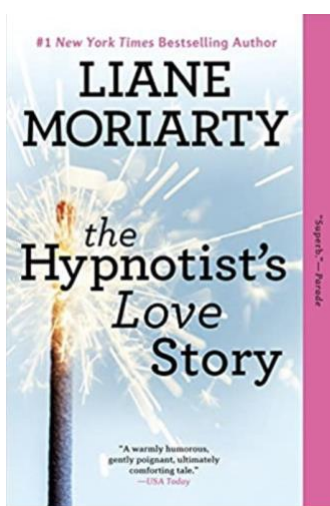
The SHSNY has two fantastic ongoing book club groups which meet monthly via Zoom.

September'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.

## The Attempted Murder of Author and Humanist Salman Rushdie

**(Ed Note:** Most major Humanist and Atheist Organizations have made written public statements regarding the recent attack on Salman Rushdie. This article comes from Humanist International)

Salman Rushdie, 75, is a renowned author of some 14 novels and defender of freedom of thought and speech, who was forced into hiding for close to a decade after Iran's then leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for his death following the publication of his 1988 book, *The Satanic Verses*, which the Ayatollah deemed to be "blasphemous". Rushdie is a [patron of Humanists UK](#), and in 2019 was awarded [Humanist of the Year](#) by the American Humanist Association.

Rushdie was [attacked](#) at an event in western New York state after his assailant stormed the stage. After receiving treatment at the scene, Rushdie was transferred to hospital where he underwent surgery. Rushdie is reported to have suffered 10 stab wounds to the neck, abdomen and eye. After spending some time on a ventilator, he has subsequently recovered and, according to his son Zafar, "though his life changing injuries are severe, his usual feisty and defiant sense of humor remains intact."

Rushdie had been invited to speak at the Chautauqua Institution on the importance of the US offering asylum for writers and other artists in exile. Indeed, according to a statement by Executive Director of PEN America, Suzanne Nossel, "just hours before the attack, on Friday morning, Salman had emailed me to help with placements for Ukrainian writers in need of safe refuge from the grave perils they face."

While the precise motivation for the attack is as yet unknown, Rushdie has faced consistent threats in connection with his work *The Satanic Verses* and his advocacy for freedom of expression. According to [The Guardian](#), "a semi-official Iranian religious foundation raised the bounty for Rushdie from \$2.8m to \$3.3m" in 2012. The assailant was apprehended at the scene. He has subsequently [pled not guilty](#) to attempted murder.

## Voting = Being the Change

Political engagement and voting are essential to ensure the humanist and secular perspectives remain firmly connected to our way of life in a nation that has a wall of church and state established to prevent the loss of non-religious values and way of life.

With the new school season in full swing, The AHA is focusing on voting rights. The organization is excited to announce multiple separate and nonpartisan efforts that individuals and groups can directly get involved in as they relate to voting and voter registration.

Voting, as well as helping register others to vote, is an integral part of our democracy and a critical way to ensure that everyone has a seat at the table; however, we need to do more than just vote. Making voting easier and more accessible to others is the first big step towards making the world you would like to see a reality. Take the lead: help inform your community about the importance of registering and voting, and spur them into civic engagement.

The American Humanist Association is proud to partner with organizations that have pulled together resources and mobilized people passionate about getting people to the polls. With elections coming up soon, **now is the time to take steps that ensure voter turnout**. You can get involved in any or all of the following opportunities.

## Voting (Continued)

Sign, and widely share with your family, friends, and networks, the [Civic Center's Youth Voting Rights Act petition](#). The Youth Voting Rights Act ([S.4500](#) and [H.R.8341](#)) would expand youth access to voting by uplifting university voter registration opportunities, requiring states to allow preregistration for those sixteen years of age, codifying the right to vote from a college campus, and establishing grant programs for youth election participation, among other changes. Similar to the action alerts you receive from us in your inbox, signing this petition informs elected officials in Congress that you support this legislation and want to see it become law.

Are you a student or educator? Sign up for a virtual High School Voter Registration Workshop on the to learn how to run a drive. Not a student or educator, but want to get involved and encourage the creation of drives? Sign up for the virtual Volunteer workshops. Both of these Zoom workshops can be found in the calendar under "Train Up". Multiple trainings are provided for each workshop, so you can choose a time that works best for you. These meetings will provide you all the knowledge and resources you need, and organizers can help answer any questions you may have.

Celebrate [Vote Early Day](#), held this year on October 28<sup>th</sup>. This is a national nonpartisan effort encouraging people to vote early and know their voting options. Voting early helps ensure that you have the tools and ability to get your vote counted, and avoid potential barriers to voting, such as long lines at the polls, voter disinformation, and last-minute emergencies.

## Ukraine Aid

By Carl L. Marxer

We have all been watching in anguish and despair as the brutal Russian regime has attacked the Ukrainian people. The UN refugee agency estimates that over 4.9 million Ukrainians have fled the violence, seeking refuge in Romania, Poland, and other neighboring countries. At least half of the nearly 4 million Ukrainian refugees created by Russia's war so far have fled to Poland, creating a humanitarian crisis there. Several Humanist and Atheist organizations from around the world are providing assistance.

The board of the Freedom From Religion Foundation has granted \$25,000 to a Polish freethought group organizing humanitarian assistance for Ukrainian refugees. The relief campaign, "Humanists Across Borders for Ukraine," is sponsored by the [The Atheist Foundation Kazimierza Lyszczynskiego](#).

The foundation is named after Kazimierz Lyszczynski (1643–1689) is also known as Casimir Liszinski a Polish philosopher. He was tortured and cruelly executed at age 46 for his atheism. In the treatise "De non existentia Dei" he asserted that God, being "a creation of a Man", does not exist and that "Religion was constituted by people without religion" with the aim of oppressing simple people.

The group ensures shelter for people fleeing the war, in particular mothers with children. They coordinate places where refugees may immediately move in and stay for a few months. They believe that is necessary to survive the very first and most difficult days. A supply of food and necessities are provided and language assistance is offered. Currently, they are hosting mothers with children in rented flats and shared apartments with two rooms.

## Ukraine (Continued)

They ask supporters who are willing to accept war refugees in an apartment or a room to contact: [biuro@lyszczyński.com.pl](mailto:biuro@lyszczyński.com.pl) or on their Facebook fanpage, <https://www.facebook.com/Ateistyczna-Fundacja-im-Kazimierza-%C5%81yszcz%C5%84skiego-654477168006947/> or by phone +48 501518757. Atheism and irreligion is uncommon in Poland with Catholic Christianity as the largest faith.

However, atheism is on the rise, which has caused tensions within the country. Humanists from Belgium formed a convoy of vehicles to transport aid to refugees on the Polish border with Ukraine. After a journey of 1,500km, employees from deMens.nu and Centre d'Action Laïque reached Medyka, a village on the Polish-Ukrainian border. Their four vans were packed with medical supplies and other necessities. The humanitarian aid was unloaded at the tent camp, then sorted and distributed to Ukrainian refugees.

Anne France Ketelaer, Chief Executive of DeMens.nu, and Vice President of Humanists International, commented: "I am incredibly proud of our humanist community, especially of those who took up the challenge to drive 3,000 km to deliver supplies and bring back 26 refugees. We've proven that we are compassionate when we are needed and strong when it counts. Together we stand with Ukraine." deMens.nu continues to collect funds to help Ukrainian refugees. deMens.nu and CAL are purchasing bandages, syringes, infusions, paracetamol, ibuprofen, isobetadine, styptic drugs, antibiotics, hemostatic agents, and other supplies such as baby food, milk powder, wet wipes, sanitary towels, candles, diapers, thermal blankets, gloves, hats, stockings, backpacks, thermal clothing, ski clothes, sleeping bags, food preserves and ready meals. You can donate to BE 55 9734 2242 6344.

## Selected Upcoming Events for Humanists from Around the Country and the Globe!

**September 1<sup>st</sup>: Skeptical Inquirer Presents: Jerry Coyne interviews Richard Dawkins** Registration: CFI-NY Website or CFI Website for Details and Link

**September 4<sup>th</sup>: Connections: Humanist Community of NY: Loneliness** Registration: <https://www.meetup.com/connections-humanist-community-new-york/events/287385948/>

**September 6<sup>th</sup>: Connections: Humanist Community of NY: On Spirituality, Religion, Agnosticism, and Atheism** Register: <https://www.meetup.com/connections-humanist-community-new-york/events/287951481/>

**September 10<sup>th</sup>: HI Presents: Islam and Secular Democracy** Registration: <https://civi.secularism.org.uk/civicrm/event/register?id=33&reset=1>

**September 15<sup>th</sup>: The Leakey Foundation: Lunch Break Science: Updates on Human Evolution** Registration: <https://leakeyfoundation.org/event/lunch-break-science-2/2022-09-15/>

**September 20<sup>th</sup>: AHA Presents Speaking of Humanism: What Difference does Difference Make: Humanism After Inclusion** Registration: AHA Website for Details and Link

**September 29<sup>th</sup>: A C Grayling on 'Humanism and The Big Questions'** Registration: <https://humanists.uk/events/a-c-grayling-leeds-humanists/>

## Excerpt: Commentary: Religion and Foreign Policy

By Herb Silverman

(Ed. Note: Reprinted from [thehumanist.com](http://thehumanist.com))

Problems usually arise when a country applies religion to its foreign policy. United States foreign policy should always be secular. At the same time, we should learn about the religious and cultural beliefs of people in countries where we are engaged, so we can communicate effectively and determine rational strategies to accomplish our mission.

It's helpful to look at what hasn't worked and not repeat it. This includes, but is not limited to, making assumptions like the following:

- God is on our side, which means Satan is on the other side. This turns the engagement into a binary and simplistic battle between good and evil, with no room for compromise or negotiation.
- All religions are good, and adherents who act in a manner we dislike are acting contrary to their religious doctrines.
- Government officials may proselytize here and elsewhere, favor one religion over another, or religion in general over non-religion.
- If we satisfy powerful religious leaders or factions, then we may ignore human rights.

Here's what we should do (with credit to Rabbi Hillel, who summed up the Jewish religion around 30 BCE): "What is hateful to you, do not do to others." How's that for a reasonable foreign policy idea?

It's easier to count the number of just *holy wars*: 0. No country goes to war thinking its cause is unjust. While wars are viewed as "just" going in, the story is often different going out.

People who choose to die in the name of their gods are free to do so, but they have no right to take innocent victims. We've seen "war's peace" too many times. Maybe loving instead of arming against your neighbor would be a good start.