



# The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

[www.SBHumanists.org](http://www.SBHumanists.org)

AUGUST 2016

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## August Program:

### Craig Smith: Is the First Amendment Obsolete?

Craig Smith will speak on the First Amendment and issues related to free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and privacy.



Craig Smith is a Professor of Law, at the Santa Barbara/Ventura Colleges of Law. He is a graduate of UCLA and the University of California, Hastings College of Law and a member of the California Bar since 1976.

Craig is the author of two books, *The Essential Contract Law Casebook* and *California Contract Law, Cases & Materials*.

Craig also has a blog in which he writes about local politics and other observations in the Santa Barbara area: <http://craigsmithsblog.blogspot.com/>

When he's not teaching classes or blogging, Craig enjoys bike riding, skiing, and playing piano.

**When:** Saturday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**Where:** Patio Room, Vista del Monte (**Park ONLY in spaces marked "VDM"**).

**Time:** Meet at 2:30pm for socializing and light refreshments provided by HSSB. Program begins at 3:00 pm

**Donation:** \$2 members/\$5 non-members. Students with ID are free.

**Optional Buffet Dinner:** Dinner buffet at Vista del Monte. \$25 includes tax and tip. RSVP to Nan Cisney by 12 noon on Thursday, August 18<sup>th</sup>: [cisneynan@gmail.com](mailto:cisneynan@gmail.com)

**For More Info:** Call 805-769-4772 (769-HSSB)

## Activities

Don't forget that we have a wonderful buffet dinner following the Saturday program (August 20<sup>th</sup>). The menu is mixed green salad with assorted dressings, dinner rolls, salmon with dill, baked chicken, brown rice, roasted potatoes, vegetable blend, and assorted dessert selection. Cost is \$25 per person, which includes tax, tip and wine. RSVP to [cisneynan@gmail.com](mailto:cisneynan@gmail.com) no later than 12 noon, Thursday, August 18<sup>th</sup>. You can submit your payment to Nan before 3 p.m. on Saturday, before the program begins. If you are paying by check, make it payable to Humanist Society. **Please note:** It is very important to RSVP for the dinner and then attend it if you have signed up for it; otherwise, HSSB has to pay for no-shows.

### President's Column: Changing Political Mores Roger Schlueter

We are in the midst of the quadrennial World Series of politics. Consequently, I will most likely comment several times over at least the remainder of this year, if not well into 2017. It is prudent for me, then, to issue the usual disclaimer applicable to 501(c)(3) organizations such as our own Society:

The Humanist Society of Santa Barbara, in keeping with our tax-exempt status, takes no stance nor offers any opinion on candidates for political office. We can engage with advocacy for those values underpinned by widely accepted Humanist principles. Further, all the opinions expressed by me here in our newsletter or other venues are purely my own and do not reflect the Society as a whole.

Now that the lawyers and IRS are happy, let's look at the changing political mores highlighted by the highly unusual, often baffling but always fascinating contest between the Republicans

and Democrats to nominate their respective candidates for the Presidency. This political season has seen utterances and actions taken by candidates, their parties and supporters that would have gravely, if not fatally, damaged candidates in the past.

Remember the (in)famous Howard Dean "[scream](#)" after his surprisingly high position in the 2004 Iowa caucus? I didn't understand why his evident and perfectly understandable enthusiasm at his victory celebration virtually doomed his candidacy at the time. But not this year. Various candidates have not only yelled but have used vulgar words and accusations in doing so. This has served to substantially degrade the level of the political campaigns and, possibly worse, has emboldened campaign staff and ardent supporters to engage in similar invective speech.

During the 2008 campaign - which had its share of nuttiness after Palin was picked as the GOP Vice-Presidential candidate - John McCain [corrected](#) two of his supporters at a rally when they opined that Obama was a Muslim and an Arab. Most admirably, he did this without hesitation, even taking the microphone away from a woman who made the latter accusation, and stating that Obama was a "decent family man, citizen" to which the remainder of the audience did not react negatively. I cannot imagine this happening in the heated, acerbic political environment we find ourselves in today.

I'll cite just one more example that has a direct parallel to the current campaign although this discussion could go on for pages. In 2006 George Allen was an up and coming Republican star who [said](#), "... this fellow over here, Macaca, or whatever his name is ..." during a re-election campaign rally. It seemed to me at the time as no big deal and reviewing it today I still come away with the sense that it had no import whatsoever and did not reflect a character flaw of Allen's. But that one comment basically

ended Allen’s entire political career. Today, it wouldn’t even be a blip on the radar of the 24/7 news cycle.

This coarsening of our political conversations has only deleterious effects. Rather than arguing differing policies and governmental ideas, the candidates and campaigns trade ever-worsening barbs to see who can win the Twitter War. I am reminded of the phrase, “We won the battle but lost the war” except in the current political conflict we don’t even have the temporary balm of winning any battles but rather are subject to the incessant drum of political gutter-shipping. It’s only July but I am already for this slugfest to be over.

**Letter to the Editor**

In Tom Mates’ recent talk, he said that people saw Trump as the Messiah who would solve their problems magically. What he did not consider is the likelihood that they are correct. There seems to be considerable evidence that Trump is God. After all, Trump is egotistical, mean, vengeful, arbitrary, inconsistent, racist, misogynistic and is (according to him) greater in just about all ways to any mortal man. Sounds just like Yahweh to me.

---Wayne Beckman

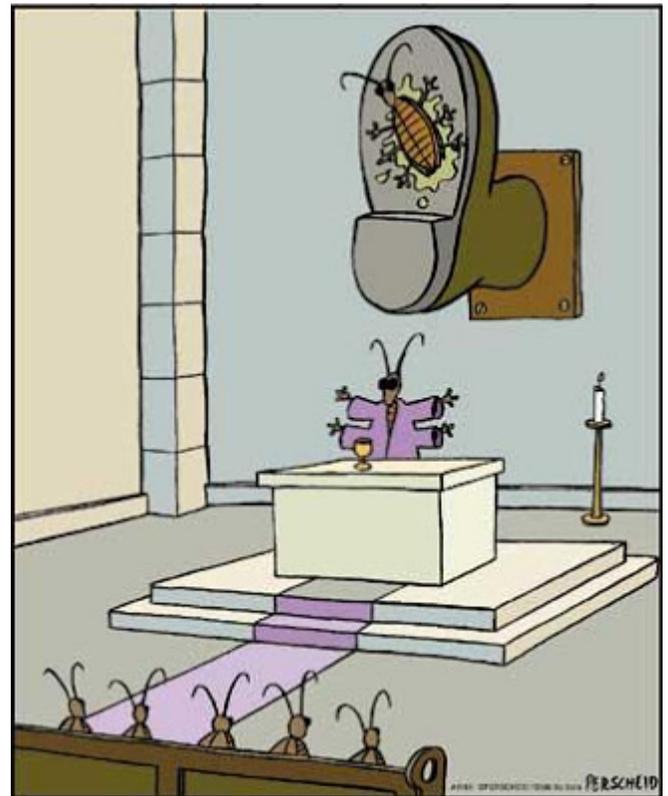
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A novice in the monastery is assigned to the Scriptorium to help the other monks in copying the old texts by hand. He notices, however, that instead of copying the original books , they are copying the copies. So, the novice speaks to a senior monk to ask him about this. He points out that if there was an error in the first copy, that error would be continued in all of the other copies. The senior monk says, “We have been copying from the copies for centuries, but you make a good point, my son.” So he seeks an

audience with the abbot, who considers the point and reluctantly grants the possibility. However, the abbot elects to undertake the investigation personally.

So, the abbot goes down into the archives with one of the copies to check it against the original. Hours later, nobody has seen him. So, the senior monk who arranged the audience goes downstairs to look for him. He hears sobbing coming from the back of the cellar and finds the abbot leaning over one of the original manuscripts sobbing uncontrollably. He asks the abbot, “What's wrong?”

“The word is *celebrate*, “ says the abbot.



**July Program:  
Tom Mates –  
Campaign 2016: Faith, Bias,  
and the Wish for Kings  
Robert Bernstein**

Author and UCSB scientist Tom Mates cautioned us freethinkers not to be too focused on religion and God when it comes to the dogmatic challenges of today. He focused on the 2016 campaign and the search for a political savior. He sees this as a secular version of the search for a religious savior.

One factor: Politicians are more likely than in the past to say pretty much anything. Facts are less important than ever. The Internet allows people to enter an information bubble or echo chamber where their own views are validated without question. Anonymity allows extreme views to be voiced openly.

And journalists don't demand answers to valid questions. Candidates dodge media questions by saying, "Look at the other guys. Look at the bad stuff they are doing." And they get away with the dodge.

The Republican-controlled Senate is refusing even to hold hearings on Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court. Republican Senators Hatch and McConnell brought up the case of Democrats refusing to approve Bork to the Supreme Court thirty years ago. Even though Democrats did give Bork a fair hearing, and they concluded that Bork's judicial misdeeds during Watergate disqualified him.

At no time are facts checked. "Each side" gets to say its piece with no accountability, which means that the side that lies more gets to win. Ironically, the Internet has made it easier than ever to check facts. But journalists have totally walked away from this responsibility.

Even worse, the media can create a candidate essentially out of thin air. Or ignore one to death. When Senator Bernie Sanders was drawing record crowds to rallies a year ago, the corporate media waged a news blackout.

At the same time, a reality TV star who has never held elected office was given prime time on *60 Minutes* and other news shows. CBS Executive Chair Leslie Moonves said of Trump's outrages and free publicity, "It may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS."



*Our July speaker and HSSB member, Tom Mates (left) with HSSB President Roger Schlueter (right). Photo by Robert Bernstein.*

We saw the same lack of fact-checking in the run-up to the Bush-Cheney war in Iraq. The media made a *mea culpa* long after it was too late to matter. As with Trump, Mates compared such gross negligence to a surgeon neglecting to remove a pair of galoshes he found inside the patient.

The press acts mystified as to Trump's appeal to evangelists. It is no mystery. Trump is a savior and evangelists want a savior. Religion is about salvation – save us from evil – from Mexicans and Muslims. Trump tells us that he will take us back to the Garden of Eden when all was well. He is like Superman or those other

superheroes who work outside the law and just get things done by magic.

Superheroes don't have to work with anyone. There is no talk of separation of powers. Trump is the boss. He doesn't want to deal with a free press. He has banned the *Washington Post* from covering his campaign simply for doing their job.

During the Great Depression, people went to lavish musicals to escape. Now they go to superhero movies where good triumphs over evil.

We are not London during the blitz, Mates pointed out. Yes, people are having trouble getting ahead. Yes, young people face a less prosperous future than their parents. But we have dealt with worse stresses before.

Remotely responsible leadership in Washington would have invested in our future with public works projects rather than squandering money on pointless wars.

Trump talks of blowing everything up and starting over. Blowing what up? What do you do with ISIS? Trump talked of Patton. How do you wipe out an Internet phenomenon with tanks?

What about health care? Put smart people in a room until it is fixed, Trump says. Will it go through Congress? Be Constitutional? It is the ultimate faith-based system with magic all the way down.

Trump has a messianic mission to build a wall and make all well within. That is Heaven, the original walled city! Where everyone has to share the same belief system! Trump had people swear loyalty to him at rallies.

Bush and Cheney offered the same magical plan for the Middle East: Blow it up and start over. We were a law unto ourselves, utterly ignoring

the Geneva Conventions. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said they were "quaint." The media were AWOL.

Mates went on to reproductive rights as another example of the media irresponsibility. Marjorie Dannenfelser of the Susan B. Anthony List, an anti-choice group, was on NPR. She falsely claimed that Susan B. Anthony said that abortion doctors were "thrice guilty" for driving women to abortion for their profit. In fact, the quote said it was the husbands who were thrice guilty. And it was not even written by Susan B Anthony. NPR made no effort to fact check these lies.

Our primary election system is dominated by the most anxious voters rather than the most thoughtful or most visionary ones. Fear works for them and they want saviors, tyrants and kings to solve problems.

We need better parties. Better journalists. And better citizens. Mates asked the audience for their ideas.

HSSB President Roger Schlueter pointed out that the media are afraid of losing access if they are too critical.

Another member said that corporate media don't want to cover candidates like Bernie Sanders who want to raise taxes on their class. That NPR really is just corporate media, too, because of the source of their funding.

I pointed out that we do have independent media in the case of Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now*. We need to support that with donations and taking the time to listen.

I also pointed out that Bernie Sanders' campaign was never about him. It was about a "Political Revolution." He is promising to create one or more organizations to continue that revolution no matter who is elected.

It is up to us to get active with that movement to keep it going.

Post-talk, Tom Mates also wanted us to consider what he calls the War on Democracy being waged unilaterally by the Republican Party.

First: by extreme gerrymandering of Congressional districts. In 2012, Republicans were given a 33-seat House majority despite winning only 48 percent of the vote!

Second: by Republican voter-suppression laws. Despite no evidence of individual voter fraud, "voter ID" laws have been passed with clear partisan bias. For example, in Texas a gun permit counts as a voter ID, but student ID does not!

Mates concluded with, "Some state GOP officials (in Virginia, for example) are looking into the possibility of gerrymandering the Presidential election." How? "By changing the rules so that the members of the electoral college are apportioned NOT as 'winner-take-all' state by state, but instead are broken down within each state according to how many districts are held by each of the two parties!"

The people need to get organized and fight back. And, fight forward for the vision that they do want for our future!

*Note to HSSB members and newsletter readers, you can listen to Tom's talk at this link:*

<http://www.santabarbarahumanists.org/article/9305-audio-of-tom-mates-july-2016-talk-on-religious-aspect-of-presidential-election>

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*In Nature, there are neither rewards nor punishments; there are consequences. ---Robert G. Ingersoll*

## Humanism in a Campaign Video Roger Schlueter

On June 7<sup>th</sup> of this year, on the occasion of Hillary Clinton being the first woman to be nominated for President of the United States by a major political party, her campaign released a [video](#) commemorating the importance of that event. It begins with Clinton as the voice-over then quotes other notable feminists. The following is a transcript of the first 30 seconds of that video:

If America is going to lead, we need to learn from the women of the world who have blazed new paths. Think of the suffragettes who gathered at Seneca Falls in 1848 and those who kept fighting until women could cast their vote. "Those who think that the women's liberation movement is a joke; I disabuse them of that notion. It is about equal opportunity..."<sup>1</sup>.... "They're really talking about **Humanism**."<sup>2</sup> ... "The time has come when I had been pushed as far as I could stand to be pushed. I had to know once and for all what rights I had as a human being."<sup>3</sup>

Notes:

1 Quoting Shirley Chisholm

2 Quoting Gloria Steinem

3 Quoting an unknown black woman being arrested

**I wonder if this is the first mention of Humanism in a campaign video by a candidate for POTUS. I would bet that in our lifetime it is.**

**Elings Park Summer Science Camp**  
**Roger Schlueter**  
**Photos by Roger Schlueter**

As you know, our Society created a John Coppejans Summer Science Camp Scholarship Fund to help needy kids to enable them to attend the annual science camp at Elings Park. Pat Coppejans began the fund with a generous donation which was matched by our Society. We then invited others to contribute to the fund with the promise that 100% of the funds would go directly to deserving kids. Neither our Society nor Elings Park would use any of the money for administrative or other expenses. The Police Activities League (PAL) evaluated the financial status of the camp participants in order to identify those who qualified for a scholarship. This was also done at no cost to us.



Leader Jill



Elings Park does not actually conduct the camp but rather they contract Destination Science who organizes and staffs the camps. The theme of this camp was “Roller Coaster Science,” which you can read about [here](#).



This year the camp was held on July 5<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>. A total of 24 kids, ages 5-11, attended the camp with 20 of them qualifying for scholarships (the final number of scholarships to be awarded has yet to be determined).

I visited the camp on the last day to see what they had done and to get a sense of the enthusiasm of the participants. The kids all seemed to be actively involved, focused on their current tasks and having a lot of fun as indicated by all the smiles in these photos. The two leaders, Jill and Daniel, also seemed to be enjoying themselves. I came away from the visit immensely pleased that we had a small part in making it happen. I hope we can continue our collaboration with Elings Park staff in the years to come.



Leader Daniel

## Non-HSSB Events of Interest

### Upcoming Events in California:

- August 7: Sean Carroll: *The Big Picture: On the Origins of Life, Meaning, and the Universe Itself*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. <http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/the-big-picture-on-the-origins-of-life-meaning-and-the-universe-itself/>
- August 21: William London: *The "Health Freedom" Movement versus Consumer Protection*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. <http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/the-health-freedom-movement-versus-consumer-protection/>
- October 16-17: California Freethought Day (October 16) and Secular Advocacy Day (October 17). Speakers include Aaron Ra, David Silverman, Mya Saleem, David McAfee, and others. Sacramento. <http://freethoughtday.org/>

### Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- September 23-24: Women in Secularism 4 Conference. Speakers include Wendy Kaminer, Maryam Namazie, Annie Laurie Gaylor, and lots more. Arlington, VA. <http://womeninsecularism.org/>
- October 7-9: 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Freedom From Religion Foundation National Convention. Speakers include Daniel Dennett, Susan Jacoby, Lawrence Krauss, Jerry Coyne, and many more. Pittsburgh, PA. <http://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>
- October 27-30: CSICon Las Vegas. Speakers include Richard Dawkins, Jim Underdown, Harriet Hall, James Randi, Eugenie Scott, Susan Gerbic, and lots more! Las Vegas, NV. <http://www.csiconference.org/>

### HSSB Contact Information

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#### Newsletter Deadline:

Deadline for submissions to the Secular Circular is midnight, the last day of each month.

**HSSB meetings** are held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 2:30 pm, usually in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Rd., Santa Barbara. More information is available at our web site: [www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org](http://www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org). At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis. Students are free with a Student ID.

**Annual HSSB membership dues** are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) to become a Society Supporter. One may subscribe to our newsletter only for an annual fee of \$20.

To join HSSB, please send your contact information and a check for your membership dues to HSSB, PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, Attn: Mary Wilk. For membership information contact Mary Wilk at 805-967-3045 or [mwilk@cox.net](mailto:mwilk@cox.net)

Copies of this newsletter are posted on the HSSB website. Photos are on the website and available via the link

<http://picasaweb.google.com/Humanist.Society.of.Santa.Barbara>

See us on Facebook





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### **HSSB Calendar**

**Tuesday August 16: Board Meeting:** 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

**Saturday August 20: Monthly Meeting:** Craig Smith will speak on "Is the First Amendment Obsolete?"; the Patio Room at Vista del Monte. Meet at 2:30 p.m. for socializing and light refreshments. Talk starts at 3:00 p.m. Optional buffet dinner after the talk at Vista del Monte.

**Sunday August 28:** (and the last Sunday of every month), 10 a.m., **Secular Sunday Brunch** for humanists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, singles, couples and families without religion. No cover charge; membership not required. Pay only for your food, drink and tips. Cody's Cafe, 4898 Hollister Ave. in the Turnpike Center, Goleta in the room to the right as you enter the restaurant. For information phone Board member, Mary Wilk at 805-967-3045.

**Tuesday September 13: Board Meeting:** 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

**Saturday September 17: Monthly Meeting:** John Woolley will speak on presidential politics; the Patio Room at Vista del Monte. Meet at 2:30 p.m. for socializing and light refreshments. Talk starts at 3:00 p.m. Optional buffet dinner after the talk at Vista del Monte.