



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

SEPTEMBER 2016

September Program:

John Woolley: Legacies of 2016 (Hint: Not the Revolution)

The election of 2016 has been one of the most surprising and disturbing American national elections in our lifetime. Looking to the future, what does it portend for political parties, federalism, and the Obama policy initiatives? Is American democracy at a decisive crossroads? In this talk, Professor Woolley reviews some of the data and theory that are relevant for thinking about these issues, and offer views of both the short-term and the long-term future.

John Woolley is a Professor of Political Science at UCSB, and received his Ph.D is from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His areas of specialization are American Politics, Politics of Public Policy, and Political Economy. Professor Woolley's current research focuses on change over time in the presidency and presidential use of unilateral action, and financial regulatory reform. He also continues to be involved in research on the politics of monetary policy.



He has collaborated with others in work addressing democracy and economic growth, and California environmental policy (activities of watershed management groups). Together with Gerhard Peters, Professor Woolley has developed an extensive and award-winning website, The American Presidency Project (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>), widely used by scholars and others interested in the presidency and American political history.

When: Saturday, September 17th, 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, September 15th: cisneynan@gmail.com

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

President's Column: On Moral Prerogatives Roger Schlueter

There is yet another court case dealing with a proposed religious exemption from the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) that raises some points of interest to Humanists. I'll briefly summarize the case as I understand it then link the case to Humanists principles.

The case *Real Alternatives v. Burwell* involves the obligation of organizations to provide FDA-approved contraceptives to their employees with the exception that the government recognizes two alternative exemptions for recognized **religious** groups. First, houses of worship have a blanket exemption while religious non-profits can apply for exemption in which case the government arranges for alternative contraception coverage at no cost to the insurer.

Real Alternatives, Inc. is an anti-abortion non-profit organization in Pennsylvania that has applied for the optional exemption but it is NOT a religious organization. It bases its claim on the fact that it believes that abortion is morally unacceptable independent of any religious imperative. This is what sets this case apart from others; it is the first to claim moral rights independent of religious rights.

This key facet of the case links the issue to Humanism. Suppose one clear principle of Humanism was an absolute rejection of abortion for any reason (I know it is a wacky hypothetical; work with me here). We would also want the optional exemption even though Humanism is not a religion. That is why I hope to see Real Alternatives, Inc. win their case. Basically it is trying to establish that strong moral convictions can arise from non-religious sources and should be recognized on an equal footing with religious principles.

Americans United for Separation of Church and

State (AU) has filed an *amicus* brief, along with several other organizations, that argues that Real Alternatives, Inc. should not prevail! They argue from two grounds: First, that Real Alternatives, Inc. is not a church or anything like a church, and thus should not even be allowed to apply for an exemption. But for me, this misses a crucial point of the case, namely, that established, written, long-standing moral prerogatives should be equally recognized by the law notwithstanding their religious origins.

Second, they argue that employers should not have a right to force their moral views, religious or not, on their employees and their dependents. I agree with this perspective but it appears to me to miss the central point of the case that established moral principles should stand or fall independent of their origins.

Here's an interesting factoid regarding the case. The judge in Pennsylvania who heard the case is John E. Jones III, the jurist who wrote the brilliant decision in *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* that demolished the teaching of "intelligent design" and who was keynote event during our celebration of Darwin's 200th birthday. He has ruled in favor of Real Alternatives, Inc. But the case is on appeal.

A Note from the Editor

Yes, this is a smaller-than-normal issue of *The Secular Circular*. My excuse is that I will be traveling at the end of August and for much of September and needed to get this edition of the newsletter completed and distributed before leaving. Wayne and I will be on our motorcycle headed to Glacier National Park and points south and east. We will return in September with pictures and stories of adventure, keeping in mind that "adventure is discomfort recounted at leisure..."

--Diane, ed.

August Program:**Craig Smith: The First Amendment:
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
Diane Krohn**

Craig Smith began his talk by mentioning that legend has it that the First Amendment is the first because the Founding Fathers thought it was the most important of the constitutional amendments.

Text of the First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Craig's talk focused on the free speech aspects of the First Amendment. Some highlights from Craig's talk:

- Privacy: Do people even care about this anymore? There is lots of oversharing on various internet platforms (Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).
- The Good: Right to privacy. Although not specifically mentioned in the First Amendment, it has been specifically recognized by the Supreme Court in the case *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965).
- The Bad: Right to privacy. For example, privacy and cell phone records. If law enforcement asks for cell phone records to track someone subject to the 4th Amendment? No, this does not require a search warrant because data in the hand of a third party has less stringent requirements for searches. The case cited is *United States v. Graham* (2012).
- The Ugly: Right to privacy. What about false or scandalous information that shows up in

a Google search? A person has no recourse unless it has shown to cause "real world harm"; "a concrete and particularized injury." The case is *Spokeo v. Robins* (2016); (although in this case, it was punted by the Supreme Court and went back to the lower court; *Spokeo* may return to the Supreme Court at a later date.)

There is much more of Craig's talk that is very interesting! Listen to Craig's entire talk here: <http://www.santabarbarahumanists.org/article/9509-audio-of-craig-smith-august-2016-talk-on-1st-amendment>

**Thanks to Christians, After School
Satan Clubs May Be Coming to an
Elementary School Near You
Hemant Mehta**

(Excerpted from *The Friendly Atheist*, July 31, 2016)

When Congress passed the Equal Access Act of 1984, evangelical Christians were thrilled. It meant the government couldn't stop the formation of after-school Bible clubs at public schools throughout the country — they had the right to use public school space just like any other club. The late Jerry Falwell was ecstatic, saying, "We knew we couldn't win on school prayer, but 'equal access' gets us what we wanted all along."

...A group of atheists tried to push back in one District last year by starting a club for children of non-religious parents called Young Skeptics (sponsored by the tongue-in-cheek "Better News Club, Inc"). Great idea, but it never really gained much traction.

But that was before Satanists got involved...

Read the rest of the article here:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2016/07/31/thanks-to-christians-after-school-satan-clubs-may-be-coming-to-an-elementary-school-near-you/>

Activities

Don't forget to sign up for the buffet dinner following the Saturday program (September 17th). The menu is mixed green salad with assorted dressings, wheat rolls, herb roasted chicken, chef's fresh catch, brown rice, mashed potatoes, seasonal vegetable blend, and assorted desserts. Cost is \$25 per person, which includes tax, tip and wine. RSVP to cisneynan@gmail.com no later than 12:00 noon, Thursday, September 15th. 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.

Politics by the Numbers

Roger Schlueter

As you know, each national election year the two major political parties prepare a statement of their political values and how they should be implemented. Many of the state parties also prepare their own platforms. Of course, after much work goes into the preparation of the platforms, they are summarily ignored by the candidates and have no influence on the President's policies and priorities in the subsequent administration. Nevertheless, the platforms do give some insight on the party's priorities and the actions and legislation they suggest to move the country in their preferred direction.

Therefore, I looked through the official Republican and Democratic party platforms and picked out the occurrence of selected key words. The result is shown in the following table. The first column shows the words that I counted; my selection of words is rather arbitrary but I did want to look at the level of religiosity in both documents.

The next two columns show the word count for each word. In some cases, I thought an additional note was necessary to give some context for the actual word count. These notes are important in understanding the word counts.

I would hasten to add that one should be chary to draw any firm, useful insights from this data. Nevertheless, I thought the results were interesting enough to share them with you.

Word	Dem	GOP
god	31 (Note 1)	16 (Note 2)
bible	0	3
christian	1 (Note 3)	8
terrorism	8	13
Obama	20 (Note 4)	19 (Note 5)
Clinton	0	5

Notes:

1. In all cases, used in the context: "...people are able to reach their **God**-given potential..."
2. In eight cases, used in the context: "...people are able to reach their **God**-given potential..."
3. Used to reference genocide against Christians in the Middle East.
4. The word Obamacare is not used. Contrast with Note 5.
5. Obamacare accounts for 9 of these.



Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- September 18: Michael DeDora: *Defending the First Amendment and More: The Work of CFI's Policy and Legal Departments*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
<http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/defending-the-first-amendment-and-more-the-work-of-cfis-policy-and-legal-de/>
- October 2: David Klein: *Capitalism & Climate Change: The Science & Politics of Global Warming*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.
<http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/capitalism-climate-change-the-science-politics-of-global-warming/>
- 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: 39th 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. 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

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





Humanist Society of
Santa Barbara
PO Box 30232
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HSSB Calendar

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.

Sunday September 25: (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 October 11: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday October 15: Monthly Meeting: Donna Lewis will present our third annual discussion of recent Supreme Court decisions; 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.