



AHA Chapter

THE NEWSLETTER OF

# The HUMANIST ASSOCIATION of CONNECTICUT

July 2013



CSH Affiliate

## *The Science Of Smart: News From The Front Lines Of The Nature-Nurture Wars*

Our July monthly meeting, on Monday, July 15 at 7:30 p.m. at 700 Hartford Turnpike in Hamden, features a return visit from member Gregory Shenk, who earned his Ph.D. in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Connecticut. He teaches at the Greater Hartford Academy of Mathematics and Science.

Francis Galton, Charles Darwin's first cousin, is considered by many historians to be the father of heritability and intelligence research. But the reliability of heritability calculations and the techniques for making them have been called into question many times over the last several years. A crude proxy for direct effects of genes on specific traits, it was nonetheless the best tool researchers had to work with. That is, until now. Developments in DNA sequencing technology have made it possible to hunt for specific genes and analyze large samples. This presentation will address recent developments in the evidence for "nature" that these studies have exposed.

On the other hand, those who are skeptical of the primacy of genes in determining intellectual differences can point to a rich body of research showing substantial support for "nurture's" role. In fact, some developmental biologists now argue that the majority of multifactorial trait differences are best understood as the product of a complex interaction between genes and the

## *Calendar of Events*

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are held at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden, CT. RSVP for dinners at [meetup.com/cthumanist](http://meetup.com/cthumanist).

### JULY

Mon., 1	Social Dinner at Turkish Kebab House, 1157 Campbell Ave., West Haven. (203) 933-0002	7:00 p.m.
Sat., 6	Humanist Conversations: Human Effects on the Environment	2:30 p.m.
Mon., 15	Monthly Meeting <b>Main program:</b> Dr. Gregory Shenk — <i>The Science of Smart</i>	7:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.
Sun., 21	Board meeting	2:30 p.m.
Sat., 27	Book Discussion: <i>The Golden Compass</i> by Philip Pullman	3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

### AUGUST

Mon., 5	Social Dinner at Turkish Kebab House, 1157 Campbell Ave., West Haven. (203) 933-0002	7:00 p.m.
Sat., 10	Humanist Conversations: TBA	2:30 p.m.
Mon., 19	Monthly Meeting <b>Main program:</b> Daniel Finn of Pioneer Valley Local First on local and fair trade	7:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.
Sat., 24	Book Discussion: TBA	3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Sun., 25	Board meeting	2:30 p.m.

### [www.cthumanist.org](http://www.cthumanist.org)

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environment into which the traits they specify develop.

Both sides agree that genes play an important role in building and programming our brains for intelligence but few seem to have thought about the obvious evolutionary questions this raises. For instance, what's intelligence for? Are there good evolutionary reasons to expect it to vary and, if so, what microevolutionary pressures would have favored genetic

vs. environmental determination of variability? Might it be reasonable to predict general differences to have emerged between geographically delineated populations?

We will begin with our customary half-hour of refreshments and conversation at 7:30 p.m. followed by Greg's talk at 8:00 p.m. at 700 Hartford Turnpike in Hamden. Bring a friend!

## *Conversations - July 6*

Our Conversations session, at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 6 at 700 Hartford Turnpike in Hamden, will focus on two TED talks on the Environment. The first (22:20 min), "How to Fight Desertification and Reverse Climate Change," is described as "a quietly powerful talk" by Allan Savory, in which he describes his discovery of a revolutionary system based on his 1960s "breakthrough in understanding the degradation and desertification of grassland ecosystems." In the

*Continued over*

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*Conversations, continued*

second clip (16:31 min), "Put a Value on Nature," Pavan Sukhdev, "a banker by training,"...[with his] eye-opening charts will make you think differently about the [true] costs of air, water, trees..." and with his "natural capital accounts" [will track the true] value of plants, animals, water, and other 'natural wealth.'"

Refreshments will be served.

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# Hartford Area Humanists — July 9

The Hartford Area Humanists monthly dinner speaker series moves to a new night on Tuesday, July 9, when our own Dr. David Schafer will discuss the making of "Humanist Manifesto III: Humanism and Its Aspirations." The group meets in the back room of the Wood-N-Tap Restaurant at 12 Town Line Road in Rocky Hill at 6:30 p.m. David's talk starts at 7:00 p.m. You can keep up with new events at <http://www.meetup.com/Hartford-Humanists/>.

## Book Discussion Group: "The Golden Compass"

Our July book will be "The Golden Compass: His Dark Materials" by Philip Pullman. Pullman is a British writer who is active in humanist and secular causes. He wrote his Dark Materials trilogy as a humanist response to the heavily Christian-themed "Chronicles of Narnia" by C.S. Lewis. Although his publishers have targeted the series to young adults, Pullman intended the work for adults as well. You may enjoy the audio-book version, which utilizes actors' voices for the dialogue with Pullman as the narrator.

At the July discussion, we'll decide whether we want to read the remaining two volumes of Pullman's epic or whether we should move on to something else.

Copies are available in public libraries, in book stores and online.

## HAH Pig Roast (w/ Vegan Options) Fundraiser — August 3

All HAC Members and their guests are invited to attend a Pig Roast (w/ hot dogs and vegan options) on August 3, 2013 at 1:00 p.m. at Dan Blinn's home in Glastonbury. The event is a fundraiser sponsored by our affiliate organization Hartford Area Humanists in order to raise money for the Secular Assembly for the North East, a regional conference that is being sponsored by various secular groups in Connecticut that will be on Saturday, October 19 in New Haven. The suggested donation is \$20 and, because all of the food and beverages are being donated, all money raised will go directly to help pay for the conference. Everyone is invited to bring a side dish or dessert. Volunteers are also needed to assist with set-up and clean-up. There will also be a silent auction, so please contact Dan if you have any goods or services that you can donate. We are requesting that people respond through the Meetup page so that we have an accurate head count: <http://www.meetup.com/Hartford-Humanists/events/127104852/>. In case of rain, the Pig Roast will be held on August 4. Come on out and have a great time, and help make the SANE Conference a great success!

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](mailto:editor@cthumanist.org). We welcome humanist-themed letters, articles, poetry, news items, cartoons, and illustrations.

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