



AHA Chapter

THE NEWSLETTER OF

The HUMANIST ASSOCIATION of CONNECTICUT



CSH Affiliate

August 2014

Cosmos II

Please join us on Monday, August 18 at USNH, 700 Hartford Turnpike, Hamden, when David Schafer will present an appreciation of the *Cosmos* television series, old and new.

Carl Sagan was surely one of the most successful popularizers of science of our time, in a class with Isaac Asimov. Born in Brooklyn (11/9/1934) to a Reform Jewish family of modest means—his father an immigrant garment worker from what is now Ukraine, and his mother a New Yorker—he became entranced at an early age by the wonders of the universe. His optimism and enthusiasm, together with the clarity of his thought, made him an ideal communicator. It was no accident that he would eventually devote his entire career to studying the planets and the stars, exploring such seductive questions as the possibility of extraterrestrial life and even intelligence, and enticing his students and many others into joining him in these activities.

He was very prolific, publishing more than 600 scientific papers and authoring or editing more than 20 books. Among his many scientific achievements, one especially relevant today concerns the high surface temperature of Venus. He concluded from radio emissions from Venus that it is ca. 900°F. The NASA Mariner 2 mission confirmed his conclusions in 1962. He connected this observation with global warming on Earth, perceived it as a man-made danger and likened it to the natural development of Venus into a hot, life-hostile planet through a kind of runaway greenhouse effect.

Sagan is probably best known for the 1980 TV series *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*, which he both co-wrote with Ann Druyan (who became his wife a year later) and narrated on screen. *Cosmos* is 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.

AUGUST 2014

Sat., 2	Humanist Conversations: <i>Death</i>	2:30 p.m.
Mon., 4	Social Dinner at Turkish Kebab House, 1157 Campbell Ave., West Haven. (203) 933-0002	7:00 p.m.
Mon., 18	Monthly Meeting Main program: David Schafer on <i>Cosmos II</i>	7:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.
Sat., 23	Book Group discussion: <i>The Case for Reparations</i>	2:00 p.m.
Sun., 24	Board meeting	2:30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 2014

Sat., 6	Humanist Conversations: TBA	2:30 p.m.
Mon., 8	Social Dinner at Turkish Kebab House, 1157 Campbell Ave., West Haven. (203) 933-0002	7:00 p.m.
Mon., 15	Monthly Meeting Main program: John Pawelek – <i>An American Scientist on the Streets of Iran</i>	7:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.
Sun., 28	Board meeting	2:30 p.m.

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most widely watched series in the history of American TV, having been seen by at least 500 million people in at least 60 countries. Among his many awards and honors, *Cosmos* received two Emmys and the Peabody and Hugo Awards. For 14 years his career continued to flourish; then he was suddenly diagnosed with myelodysplasia, a blood disease, and in 1996, after many attempts at a cure, including bone marrow transplants, he died of pneumonia.

Much has been learned in the intervening years, and many have wished for an update, a sequel if you like, to *Cosmos*. Finally, one has been created, through the combined efforts of three people: Seth MacFarlane, a creator of animated films and an enthusiastic entrepreneur, has brought together Ann Druyan and another great scientist and science popularizer for our time, Neil DeGrasse Tyson, Director of the

Hayden Planetarium and “astrophysicist, author, and science communicator”—in other words, the closest thing to Carl Sagan anybody could find. The result is *Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey*, and it has already won the Critics’ Choice Television Award for “Best Reality Series,” and has been nominated for 12 Emmy Awards.

Like the original *Cosmos* this series has 13 episodes. On Monday, August 18, at 7:30 pm, we’ll show episode 12 of *Cosmos II*, entitled “The World Set Free”—a glimpse into the future, including the possibility of catastrophic global warming. We’ll start the evening as usual with half an hour of refreshments and conversation, and continue at 8 p.m. with the showing after a few announcements. A full discussion will follow. Come and bring a friend! You’ll see for yourself how well the sequel stands up to the original *Cosmos*.

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Program	David Schafer
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Publicity	Dan Blinn
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Newsletter

Editor	Carol Siddall (203) 264-8546 editor@cthumanist.org
Production:	Richard Siddall (203) 264-2182 webmaster@cthumanist.org

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The editor would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue.

Humanist Conversations: Death

“Death holds no fear for me. I’ve already tried it – before I was born – and with no ill effects. I’ll simply be going back to where I came from.” — *Mark Twain*

If we are right that the death that awaits us is an infinity of nothingness, then being dead is the ultimate non-issue. But despite Twain’s breezy dismissiveness, getting there is another matter. Come join us for Conversations at 2:30 p.m. on Sat. August 2 when we will watch a 26½ minute interview with Shelly Kagan, a philosopher who teaches a popular course at Yale on the subject. A discussion led by Tom Platt will follow. Refreshments will be served.

Joyce Wolf

Joyce Wolf, a long-time HAC member, died on Friday July 25 at Masonicare in Wallingford. Joyce did not want any services, but her family may plan a memorial in a few weeks.

Joyce was a committed Humanist. In recent years she sponsored speakers in memory of her husband Nat.

Cards may be sent to Joyce’s son at:
David & Sara Wolf
583 Ridgebury Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877

August Book Discussion

Two hundred fifty years of slavery. Ninety years of Jim Crow. Sixty years of separate but equal. Thirty-five years of racist housing policy. Until we reckon with our compounding moral debts, America will never be whole.

The Book Group will next meet on Saturday, August 23, at USNH at 2:00 p.m. We will be discussing *The Case for Reparations*, an essay by Ta-Nehisi Coates that appeared in the June edition of “The Atlantic.” The essay has attracted significant attention, and many feel that it may be a major step towards addressing centuries of injustice.

Additionally, everyone is encouraged to read one of the assigned or recommended books for the next session of the Humanist Institute, which will address contemporary issues. Those reading one of the books will be invited to make a brief presentation of that book. At the conclusion of the August session, we will select one of these books for September. The list of books can be obtained from Dan Blinn (danblinn@gmail.com).

Connecticut Secular Leadership Summit

The Connecticut Coalition of Reason is sponsoring a leadership summit on Saturday, September 20, 2014 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Unitarian Society of New Haven, 700 Hartford turnpike in Hamden. Current secular leaders and those interested in becoming secular leaders are invited to attend.

Long-time humanist leader Michael Werner will present a leadership workshop in the morning, followed by lunch (pizza with vegan options), and then an afternoon of brainstorming and networking.

Please join us to learn together, share ideas, and work with others around the state to advance the secular movement in Connecticut!

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