

LOGICAL LA

LOS ANGELES • 2018

Changing The World Through Scientific Skepticism And Critical Thinking

February 9-11, 2018

Speakers include:

Lawrence M. Krauss

Director Origins Project Arizona State University & Foundation Professor at ASU's School of Earth and Space Exploration and Physics Department



"Rivers in the Dark: Exploring Hidden Wonders in the Sky, and Things That Go Bump in the Night" *Synopsis:* The wonder of science, as opposed to religion, is that we can follow nature beyond the evidence of our senses in an open minded fashion, where preconceptions disappear in light of fascinating new discoveries about the cosmos. Almost anywhere one starts, a grain of sand, a speck in the night sky, if one follows the evidence nature has provided us, new and wondrous hidden realities become exposed. This talk will be a tour of the real river in the sky, our Milky Way Galaxy, to explore what we now know, what we don't know, and what we hope to learn about our home in the Universe.

Brian Palermo

Actor, performer, teacher, author



"How Do You Talk Logic To Those Who Don't Use It?"

Synopsis: Possessing knowledge is very different from communicating knowledge to other people. So how do you do it? How do you engage your audience, whether one person or thousands, in the most efficacious way? The "deficit model" of throwing facts at people who lack them, does not work. You have to Connect with your partners and audience. And do you know who practices constant connection with their partners and audience? Theatrical improvisors. The only way to improvise with other people successfully is to forge that connection. Brian has been deep in the world of improv

for 30 years and has distilled some of the essential guidelines of improv to help you improve your communication skills. There is no magic wand to make communication easy. But the skills presented in this talk will give you a much greater chance of success when conveying any information to anyone.

John Wathey

Computational Biologist



"The Illusion of God's Presence"

Synopsis: Science has only begun to make sense of religion's powerful grip on the human mind. Why do seven percent of members of the National Academy of Sciences believe in a personal god who answers prayer? The question is important because it probes the most irresistible essence of the appeal of religious and spiritual thinking. Using evidence from visual illusions, behavioral biology, and neuroscience, I offer an explanation in terms of a cognitively impenetrable illusion, one that science has largely overlooked.

Yvette D'Entremont

SciBabe blogger, former analytical chemist



"The Business Of Being A Guru"

Synopsis: The Business Of Being A Guru *Synopsis:* Gwyneth, Food Babe, and David Avocado Wolfe, oh my! What do they have in common? They started with a few ideas that people latched onto and turned into gurus, churning out one bad idea after another. They present seemingly very little evidence and turn themselves a tidy profit with few questions from their core audience. How do gurus get their start, how do seemingly intelligent people accept their most outrageous ideas, and more importantly, how do we stop them? Join Yvette

d'Entremont, aka the SciBabe, as she takes you on a dismantling of the new age gurus, armed with a toolkit of science, critical thinking, and couple of dirty jokes.

Pascal Gagneux

Assoc. Professor of Pathology and Anthropology, UC San Diego



"We are the Paradoxical Ape"

Synopsis: Over the last 70 thousand years, one species of bipedal ape has spread across the planet, replacing most close relatives with minimal interbreeding. Today, the remaining great apes are endangered in tropical forests of Africa and Asia while humans are rapidly changing the planet and its climate. What were the evolutionary changes that allowed such a planetary takeover? How can we have a better understanding of human origins contribute to current affair?

Diane Goldstein

Executive Board Member for the Law Enforcement Action Partnership



"Why Legalizing Drugs Can Enhance Public Safety"

Synopsis: Public polling gauges the American sentiment on the drug war, yet holds little sway over the prevailing law enforcement belief that drug use is a morally flawed choice. Recent polls reveal declining public support for our current drug policies and a widespread belief that the drug war is a failure. But the law enforcement establishment continues to support the mass criminalization of a public health issue for ideological reasons—encouraging our political leaders to cling to an outdated approach that has no foundation in science.

Speakers subject to change.

Speakers (continued):

Speakers continued

Sheldon W. Helms

Professor of Experimental Psychology, Ohlone College



"Straight Talk About Gay Conversion" *Synopsis:* As our country tackles the issues of marriage equality, gays in the military and other issues of inclusion of gays and lesbians into mainstream society, and as Russia and other countries enforce laws limiting the rights of their gay and lesbian citizens, fringe religious and therapeutic organizations have operated mostly in the shadows, attempting to convert their homosexual clients to heterosexuality through a mixture of prayer and pseudoscience. Sheldon describes the history of attempts to define homosexuality as an illness, and to make gays go straight. Some forms of gay conversion therapy have been outlawed in a few states, and one of the primary institutions that promoted it has announced its closure, but what are the real stories behind these announcements, and do they go far enough?

Harriet Hall

Retired family physician and blogger



"Enjoying Alternative Medicine" *Synopsis:* "Alternative" medicine is medicine that hasn't been proven to work; if it worked, it would just be called "medicine." Without proof of efficacy, alternative medicine is not a good choice for treating health conditions. But it can be enjoyed, in several senses of the word. And it can be very entertaining. Dr. Hall will explain, and her examples will make you laugh.

Jamy Ian Swiss

Magician, author, public speaker



"Credit the Con Man" *Synopsis:* This presentation is particularly relevant for skeptics because it explains why people get taken in, talks about cognitive dissonance, and makes a plea for empathy for believers and victims. Rather than blaming the victims—believing that victims and believers are simply credulous or stupid-skeptics who hope to change minds must first learn to understand why people think and believe as they do, and... to credit the con man.

Alex J. O'Connor

Cosmic Skeptic Blog & YouTube channel



"Why smart people believe silly things" *Synopsis:* Alex will be covering the ways in which people are fooled by others or by their failure to apply unbiased reasoning into believing irrational things about science and the world such as climate change deniers, flat earthers, conspirators, creationists.

Sian Proctor

Geoscience professor, South Mountain Community College



"Meals for Mars: Space Exploration Through Simulations on Earth"

Synopsis: Ever wonder what it would be like to live on Mars but never leave Earth? In this interactive discussion you will learn about the NASA funded Hawaii Space Exploration Analog and Simulation (HI-SEAS). It is a research habitat on the big island of Hawaii where 6 scientists live a simulated Mars life. Sian was a member of the first HI-SEAS crew and lived in the Mars simulation for 4 months. In this presentation the ins-and-outs of living in the 'Hab' will be discussed and why space exploration is good for planet Earth.

Cheryl Hollinger

TIES Associate & Teacher Corps member



"Helping Teachers Teach Evolution in the United States"

Synopsis: In April of 2015, the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science launched a new project, The Teacher Institute for Evolutionary Science (TIES). Why? Because many high school and middle school science teachers struggle with teaching evolution, but more middle school teachers struggle because they typically teach other topics in addition to life science. This presentation includes an overview of the history of evolution education in this country as well as how TIES came about and it briefly reviews national and state middle school science evolution standards. It also highlights the TIES site and TIES Teacher Corps members who give presentations to interested middle school science teachers about the most up-to-date information on

natural selection, common ancestry, and diversity so they can confidently teach the topics in their classrooms.

Julien Musolino

Franco-American cognitive scientist



"Science and the Soul"

Synopsis: Most people believe they possess an immaterial soul that will survive the death of the body. In sharp contrast, the current scientific consensus rejects the traditional soul, although this conclusion is rarely discussed publicly. In this presentation, a cognitive scientist breaks the taboo and explains why modern science leads to this controversial conclusion. Although the new scientific view of personhood departs radically from traditional religious conceptions, a coherent, meaningful, and sensitive appreciation of what it means to be human remains intact. We do not lose anything by letting go of our soul beliefs; we even have something important to gain.

Abby Hafer

Author, scientist, educator, debunker of Intelligent Design



"Everything You Know About Sex is Wrong: Part 1—The Gender Binary"

Synopsis: Why does sex exist? What are males for? Is the gender binary real? And why does a microbe have the swiftest sex life of all? Biologist Abby Hafer will explain the answers to these and other crucial questions in the presentation "Everything You Know About Sex is Wrong: Part 1—The Gender Binary". This presentation debunks the gender binary. The talk starts with how sex evolved in the first place, and then talk about sex and gender in the zoological realm, and then end by talking about how morality should not be based on the say-so of supernatural beings and their supposed interpreters. People sometimes ask me why this talk is labeled this talk as "Part One". The answer is that there are so many misconceptions about sex that they can't all be covered in a single talk. Calling it Part One leaves room for further explorations of this rich and important subject at a later date.

Speakers subject to change.