Jefferson Humanists News
February, 2021
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Sunday, February 28, 2021 from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.
JH Monthly Chapter Meeting
The Constitutional Limits on Unilateral Presidential Power
By Bob Hofmann

Professor Chen will talk about the United States Constitution's design and its efforts to limit the powers of the US President. The talk will include a discussion of how historical context and contemporary politics have influenced how presidential power has ebbed and flowed over time and an assessment of where the presidency stands in the current moment.

Alan Chen is the Thompson G. Marsh Law Alumni Professor at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, where he teaches constitutional law, federal courts, and public interest law. He is the co-author of two books, Free Speech Beyond Words: The Surprising Reach of the First Amendment (NYU Press 2017) and Public Interest Lawyering: A Contemporary Perspective (Wolters Kluwer Law & Business 2013), as well as numerous scholarly articles. Although he is a full-time academic, Professor Chen continues to carry an active litigation docket and represents plaintiffs in many high-profile civil rights cases in federal courts around the country. Prior to joining the DU faculty, Chen was a staff attorney with the ACLU's Chicago office and a law clerk to a federal district court judge in Illinois. RSVP and join us on Zoom JH Monthly Meeting - Constitutional Limits on Unilateral Presidential Power | Meetup

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

First amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Jefferson County Colorado Chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA)
JeffersonHumanists.org
University of Michigan speaker, Dr. Nate Sanders, spoke at the Jefferson Humanist Chapter Meeting on January 24, on ants’ unique and engaging world. The January program is always in celebration of Charles Darwin’s birthday on February 12.

Sanders began by saying there are 14,000 species of ants, they are on every continent and range in size from half your finger to the period at the end of this sentence. Some are benign, and some fierce fighters like the fire ant (their bite feels like your skin is on fire) and the bullet ant (you think a bullet has shot you.) An ant’s bite puts acid under your skin, causing the pain. According to the Schmidt Pain Scale of insect bites (1-4 with 4 the most painful), the bullet ant is one of two insects with the most painful bite (the other a wasp). Unfortunately, rating #3 is the Maricopa harvester ant, which lives in Colorado along with 162 different species of ants in our state.

If all the world’s ants could be weighed, they would weigh twice as much as all vertebrates in the world.

Sanders discussed the cultural role of ants, from movies to designer clothes to exotic food dishes, and then moved to incredible strengths and abilities they have. Ants are fast. The fastest marathon runner, Eliud Kipchoge, a Kenyan long-distance runner who competes in marathons, ran an average time of 4:40 minutes per mile. Ants, at a comparative distance, move at 3:45 minutes per mile.

Ants are strong. Leafcutter ants are plagued by an even tinier insect that bores into the carrier ant’s brain. So, two small sister ants ride on top of the leaf to protect the carrying ant from these attacks. This is the equivalent of a human carrying a refrigerator with two humans sitting on top. (See image)

Sanders described how ants use tools, farm fungi to feed larvae, harvest seeds, produce antibiotics, and create sustainable architecture. Some of these skills were developed millions of years before humans evolved. His slides (available on the Jefferson Humanist YouTube channel) www.youtube.com/channel/UCQAe4yuDY-yfV7vZWSkz4BQ show startling photos of ants at their work. His videos of ants cooperating to move objects 100 times their size are genuinely impressive.

Sanders concluded with two thoughts: one on Darwin’s views on the evolution of ants and one on the impact of climate change on ants.

Darwin expressed fear that ants would destroy his theory of evolution. He stated: ...will confine myself to one special difficulty, which at first appeared to me insuperable, and actually fatal to my whole theory. I allude to the neuters or sterile females in insect-communities: for these neuters often differ widely in instinct and in structure from both the males and fertile females, and yet, from being sterile, they cannot propagate their kind. Darwin elaborated on the difficulty of fitting ants into his theory. Still, he concluded that the females have a genetic interest in their sisters, and by protecting them, they succeed as a species.

Sanders’ own questions on why some locations have more ants than other areas sparked his research into the impact of climate change on ants. He looked at how many hours during a day ants are active. He concluded that ants like very temperate climate. They do not function well when it is very cold or very hot. Fire ants are typically found in the humid Southeastern United States; however, because of climate, they’ve spread north and west, causing ants to move north into Colorado.

Sanders’ presentation stimulated many questions from the appreciative audience. ⬆️
Third Thursday, February 4, 2021, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Secular Community Trivia
With host Tom Kellogg

Join a regular community trivia night and social event through Zoom with a slight heathen touch every 1st and 3rd Thursday at 7:00 p.m. We got help from a trivia guru in Dallas who runs a trendy trivia night with teams that collaborate in breakout rooms. The Boulder Atheists are hosting the event, but you can join from this Meetup with an RSVP. We invite other local secular groups and anyone else to compete and socialize, so there are more players than the RSVP count here. There will be three rounds of questions from various categories. We'll create teams by group, or somebody will assign you to a team.

You must RSVP https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/274877590/ before the meeting start time to see the Zoom link. For smart devices, get the free Meetup app and RSVP for the link.

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Monday, February 8, 2021 — 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
The Lord Is Not on Trial Here Today
Discuss a Doc: Hosted by Matthew Elisha

This month we will discuss The Lord Is Not on Trial Here Today. A Peabody and Emmy Award-winning documentary tells the compelling personal story of the late Vashti McCollum. Her efforts to protect her ten-year-old son led to one of the most critical landmarks of First Amendment cases in US Supreme Court history. This case established the separation of church and state in public schools.

The case is little-known by the contemporary American public. Yet, the McCollum decision continues to have significant ramifications for current conflicts over religion’s role in public institutions - from displays of the Ten Commandments in government buildings to student-led prayers at public school graduation ceremonies.

You can watch the program for free at https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/lord-trial-here-today/
Feel free to watch another documentary on the separation of church and state and bring your thoughts to the discussion.

REMINDER: Watch the documentary on your own and join our discussion on Monday, February 8, at 7 p.m. RSVP to this Meetup. Discuss a Doc: The Lord is Not on Trial Here Today | Meetup Only those who RSVP will receive the Zoom link for the discussion. Attendance is limited to the first 15 people who RSVP.

We hope you will join us for Discuss a Doc, a monthly discussion where we discuss the humanist issues raised by documentary films.

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Scientific Integrity

The AHA insists that scientific studies, peer-reviewed and reproduced in accordance with the highest standards, be the basis for public policy and education. Religious or sectarian doctrine is irrelevant and immaterial to discerning best practices.
In honor of Darwin Day and to help promote science education, our Humanists Helping Humanity (HHH) group is doing a drive to collect science materials to help three local Jeffco elementary schools. Like most schools, Vivian Elementary, Stober Elementary, and Everitt Middle School have limited budgets and can’t always provide all the materials necessary to effectively teach science classes, often resulting in the teachers paying for materials from their own pockets. To help these schools, their teachers, and their students, we are asking for your assistance. Fellow Humanists and proponents of science, purchase needed science materials for these schools and drop them off on Saturday, February 6th between 10:00 a.m. and noon at the Jefferson Unitarian Church (JUC) parking lot at 14350 W 32nd Ave in Golden. IF WE ARE SNOWED OUT, we will do the collection the following weekend. Time and date will be posted. Please consider purchasing some of the listed items and bringing them to our collection on February 6th. For more information and a list of items needed, see: https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/275950999/

If you would prefer to donate money. We can purchase specific items such as science scales, Petri dishes, beakers, microscope slides, pipettes, and thermometers. Please bring checks made payable to Jefferson Humanists to the JUC collection point on February 6th.

~Traci Bickell

Questions? Email Traci: HHH@jeffersonhumanists.org.
The next FROG (Free thinkers Reading Opportunity Group) will be discussing *Underland* by Robert MacFarlane via Zoom.

Robert MacFarlane is the celebrated author of books about the intersections of the human and the natural realms. In *Underland* he delivers his masterpiece: an epic exploration of the Earth's underworlds as they exist in myth, literature, memory, and the land itself. Don’t be deterred by the size of the book! I have started reading it, and it is beautifully written. The words just flow. It is well worth reading even a portion of the book.

RSVP to this Meetup at [https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/275031452/](https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/275031452/) or email frog@jeffersonhumanists.org. Only those who RSVP will receive the Zoom link for the discussion.

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**January 2021 FROG Meeting Review**  
**by Helena Jo Goldstein**

Thirteen people gathered on January 9, 2021, to discuss the FROG book selection, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, by William Kamkwamba. The author grew up in extreme poverty in Mali, Africa. Largely self-educated, he re-invented a water pump, technology known to the western world for centuries. The water pump generated electricity, which enabled his family to irrigate their fields and end periodic famine cycles.

The group discussion moved from the specifics of the author’s story to broader concerns. One issue is the problem created by the lack of a free education system. Poor families in Africa cannot afford to send their children to school, and then the lack of education contributes to the families’ continued poverty. Another problem is that in rural Mali (and probably many other countries), people must pay bribes to get electricity run to their home. So only a few wealthy people or businesses can get electricity. This corruption leads to the incredibly inefficient system of wiring homes or buildings for power, one house at a time. We discussed the impact of corruption on economic development.

March will be special as FROG has added a bonus evening meeting. On March 13, *Mistakes were Made, But not by Me* by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson will be the topic of our Zoom discussion from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

The special bonus evening meeting will be on Tuesday March 23, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. We will discuss *Listen, Liberal* by Thomas Frank. (Note, the Meetups have not yet been posted for March, but they will be coming soon.)

About *Listen, Liberal* Goodreads states: “It is a widespread belief among liberals that if only Democrats can continue to dominate national elections, if only those awful Republicans are beaten into submission, the country will be on the right course. But this is to fundamentally misunderstand the modern Democratic Party. Drawing on years of research and first-hand reporting, Frank points out that the Democrats have done little to advance traditional liberal goals: expanding opportunity, fighting for social justice, and ensuring that workers get a fair deal… with his trademark sardonic wit and lacerating logic, Frank's *Listen, Liberal* lays bare the essence of the Democratic Party's philosophy and how it has changed over the years. A form of corporate and cultural elitism has largely eclipsed the party's old working-class commitment, he finds.”

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**Evening FROG:**  
If there is interest, a few more evening FROG meetings will be added to the schedule in 2021.
The recent JH member survey of social responsibility project preferences resulted in **climate change with the highest priority environment**.

Rising sea levels, more intense and frequent natural disasters, and increased droughts are just some of the phenomena wreaking havoc on communities worldwide. The American Humanist Association’s (AHA) climate initiative, **HERE for Climate**, encourages humanists to help turn things around.

We’re deep into a climate crisis, and we have no time to waste. There’s no doubt it’s a daunting reality, and you might be unsure of how to start making a difference—and that’s okay. That’s why we created **HERE for Climate**. Through **HERE for Climate**, the AHA provides toolkits for you and your local humanist group to guide you in our fight towards a more just future and news sources and articles to keep you in the loop about all things related to the climate. Many of us are concerned about climate change. **HERE for Climate** helps us advocate for a cleaner environment, make the world safer, demand action from decision-makers on climate, and take steps toward sustainable living.

**All of this work for the climate is impossible without supporters like you.** AHA asks please consider donating to strengthen the **HERE for Climate** initiative right now. [https://tinyurl.com/y4hqjfvk](https://tinyurl.com/y4hqjfvk). Today, your gift will help maintain and build on the outstanding programs already in place and create critical new programs, like the upcoming speaker series.

**The responsibility for the kind of world we want to live in, and the world we leave behind for future generations, rests with us.** Action is necessary for change! You can start your climate journey and make a difference right now by taking a minute to donate to support humanist climate response today. 🌍

Are you **HERE for Climate**?
February 15, 2021 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
ASC Outing - Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts
Host Matthew Elisha

In celebration of Darwin Day, (February 12) this month we invite you to take a virtual tour of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge University’s exhibit, *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts*. Darwin’s key works - *On the Origin of Species* (or, more completely, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*), published on 24 November 1859, and *The Descent of Man* (1871) - were read by a large section of the public, at a time when the sciences had not yet become the preserve of specialists. A much broader public would have learned about Darwin’s theories at second hand, from reports (admiring or hostile) in the press. Artists, of course, were also aware of these ideas, and many responded in their work to their implications in ways that reflected everything from anxiety to exhilaration.

The interchange between science and art was a two-way street. The exhibition explores both directions: the sorts of visual imagery that filled Darwin’s own mind and imagination as he formed his theories, as well as the central Darwinian themes that inspired artists—the vast age of the earth, the fierce ‘struggle for existence’ that led to natural selection, and the evolution of man himself from an apelike ancestor. View the exhibit at [http://www.darw inhibitendlessforms.org/gallerydarwin/](http://www.darwinendlessforms.org/gallerydarwin/) and then join our discussion about what we saw on Monday, February 15 at 7 p.m.

REMINDER: View the exhibit ahead of time. We won’t be viewing it together when we meet, just discussing what we saw.

**PLEASE RSVP** to this Meetup [https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/275431178/](https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/275431178/). Those who RSVP on Meetup will see the link to join the Zoom meeting. Those who email for the link will be sent it a few days before the meeting.

“In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.” – Charles Darwin

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January ASC Outing Review
Denver Art Museum: Faces of Frida
Host Matthew Elisha

The Denver Art Museum had the exhibition *Frida Kahlo/Diego Rivera & Mexican Modernism* recently, so in January, we met to discuss this exhibit and the online site, *Faces of Frida* [https://artsandculture.google.com/project/frida-kahlo](https://artsandculture.google.com/project/frida-kahlo). We each shared our favorite artwork from the website or DAM exhibit, and the choices varied widely. Many liked famous Frida Kahlo works such as *The Two Fridas*, *The Broken Column*, and *The Bus*, while others liked Kahlo’s still-life paintings and self-portraits with monkeys. We learned about Kahlo’s pain throughout her life after a horrible accident when she was just 17. It was one reason she painted so many self-portraits, a practice she started when she was convalescing in bed after her accident. It was clear that her pain was reflected through many of her paintings’ images and gave them a great feeling.

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"In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.” – Charles Darwin"
Hey friends from all over! We're having a laid back meeting and will also play some fun games such as Scatergories, Fact or Crap, and more. For now, JH Happy Hour is also Game Night. Let's hang out and BYO Beverage. We can also socialize and discuss whatever you want.

You must RSVP before the meeting start time to see the Zoom link. https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/275880068/

Saturday, February 20, 2021 from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

**Humanists Perspectives:**

**The Hitch Documentary**

*Hosts: Tom K and Jim B*

We're trying a new format by showing portions of this documentary through Zoom in segments with discussions. "The Hitch" is the story of Christopher Hitchens, journalist, author, contrarian, and some might say literary badass. He was known for throwing his intellect around and taking some rather unpopular stands. If you hated him for that... well, then he was just fine with it.

You must RSVP https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/276061176/ before the meeting start time to see the Zoom link.

The Jefferson Humanists Chapter of the American Humanist Association is pleased to offer regular explorations series on third Saturdays, 10 to Noon, currently online. Each session will be slightly different and include several segments to showcase humanism aspects through presentations, videos, movies, forums, and explorations, followed by discussions. We will include time for participants to socialize virtually and get acquainted, in keeping with our chapter goal of building community.

We would like your help to tell us what topics you'd like to see explored at upcoming Humanist Perspectives programs. Let's spend a few minutes discussing this at the meeting. Which past presentations did you like that we can expand further? Maybe you've seen some good Humanist videos to show. We are also looking for people to get involved with HP and help put presentations together and co-host sessions.

Email Jim Bole with your thoughts randibole@gmail.com
The first report from our groundbreaking survey of 34,000 nonreligious Americans is now available!

Note: the greatest policy priority for secular organizations is maintaining secular public schools.

Since the founding of the United States, nonreligious people have been important, but too often an invisible, segment of American society. Despite the fact that they make up a significant and growing percentage of the population, we know remarkably little about nonreligious people and communities.

The 2019 US Secular Survey was an effort to address that gap – a groundbreaking survey of nearly 34,000 nonreligious people living in the United States. This survey brought together atheists, agnostics, humanists, freethinkers, skeptics, and others to provide essential data about our communities, our priorities, and our lives.

*Reality Check* is the first report that American Atheists is publishing from this important data set, intended to provide an overview of what we learned about nonreligious people in America and to show significant differences across regions and communities.

Read the summary here: [https://www.secularsurvey.org/executive-summary](https://www.secularsurvey.org/executive-summary) where you’ll see a US map with a percentage of very religious communities by state.

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**A Notable Book**

**36 Arguments for the Existence of God**

By Rebecca Newberger Goldstein

Equally adept at fiction (a winner of the National Jewish Book Award) and philosophy (a recipient of the MacArthur Foundation genius prize), Rebecca Newberger Goldstein now gives us a novel that transforms the great debate between faith and reason into an exhilarating romance of both heart and mind.

At the center: Cass Seltzer, a professor of psychology whose book, *The Varieties of Religious Illusion*, has become a surprise best seller. He's been dubbed the atheist with a soul, and his sudden celebrity has upended his life.
First Monday JH Salon: March 1, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
What gun laws would be beneficial to the United States?
Your hosts: Traci Bickell and Matthew Elisha

Salon: Monday, March 1, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
March’s question: "What gun laws would be beneficial to the United States?" This question often gets lost in the rhetoric of constitutional rights and personal safety. Most people have strong feelings about guns, both for and against them, but we need to get past these feelings to address the problem and develop a solution that will work.

ABOUT THE JH SALON
Much like the salons of France during the Enlightenment, we will discuss various topics and lubricate the discussion with a few libations. Issues will be worded as questions related to science, sociology, politics, philosophy, history, ethics, and more. Attendees are not required to read anything in particular before the discussion. Still, it certainly helps to do some study before the debate to make a coherent argument and back it up.

RSVP for the March meeting on Meetup JH Salon: "What gun laws would be beneficial to the United States?" | Meetup to get the Zoom link..

Salon: Monday, February 1, REVIEW
February’s question, “Should recycling be mandatory?” was joined by 14 interested people. The word “Should” was batted about with mostly no’s. The US has no national law that mandates recycling, and states have various requirements. The rate in 2018 was 32% overall, with cardboard boxes at 90%. Germany has a recycling program that really works. Their recycling rates, are highest in the EU at 66.1% tinyurl.com/118x1v21.

Dave Whamond, PoliticalCartoons.com
With permission of AHA
In February, we will read *Homesick* by Sarah Gailey. Gailey’s short story tells about the last person to leave Earth who finds that she wants to return to Earth after she gets to the crab people’s paradise world. It not so bad now that all the humans have left. The crab people have just 2 rules: 1) don’t treat our planet like you treated Earth and 2) don’t kill the crab people.

You can find a full online copy of this short story at https://firesidefiction.com/issue36/chapter/homesick/

Per the Meetup announcement, this is a relatively short story, so you are encouraged to read other of Gailey’s short stories or to read other books about the last person on Earth. I’ve included links to a page with many of Gailey’s stories and some suggestions for the last person on Earth stories. Here is the Meetup link with more information: https://www.meetup.com/JeffcoHumanists/events/275448880/

Here is the Zoom link, which is the same every time we meet, so feel free to bookmark it: Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/97807911551?pwd=VDA2elVSBjhlTmTbThWblp0alhveEltdz09 I already have March’s sci-fi discussion Meetup set to go and will post it soon.

Please submit more ideas for future stories and movies at https://forms.gle/wCYxiCa1nd4m3y4x8

I plan to compile a list of the suggestions so the group can vote on their 3 or 4 favorites in February or March. That will help us get April, May, and June meetings set. It is probably best to suggest novellas and short stories or movies rather than full novels. Until we can meet in person, we will be keeping our Zoom meetings around 1 hour since it can be tough to stay on Zoom for longer than that. Once we start meeting in person, we can consider doing a 2-hour discussion of novels.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted stories and movies so far. JH

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The Jefferson Humanists’ mission is to expand an ethical and life-affirming Humanist Community devoted to science, reason, inclusion, and social responsibility. Through community building, lectures, social activism, and discussion we expand our member’s awareness gain an understanding of the issues facing the world and provide learning opportunities through guest speakers on a variety of topics.

Science fiction writers aren't in the prediction business; they're in the speculation business, using 'hasn't happened' or 'hasn't happened yet' to create entertaining scenarios that may or may not anticipate future realities. ~James Gunn

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Become a member and connect with like-minded people.

Checkout our Website, Meetup, Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram from the link below.

https://www.jeffersonhumanists.org/
Climate Change and Its Irrefutable Science

“Because, underneath all of this is the real truth we have been avoiding: climate change isn’t an ‘issue’ to add to the list of things to worry about, next to health care and taxes. It is a civilizational wake-up call. A powerful message — spoken in the language of fires, floods, droughts, and extinctions — telling us that we need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet. Telling us that we need to evolve.”

— Naomi Klein
Climate Change is Not a Myth
https://tinyurl.com/y6spzgsb

“I’m often asked whether I believe in global warming. I now just reply with the question: Do you believe in gravity?”
— Neil deGrasse Tyson

2021 Jefferson Humanists Leadership

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Vice President: OPEN
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Secretary: Shana Rubio-Hernandez
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Humanists Helping Humanity (HHH): Traci Bickell
FROG Book Discussion Leader: Helena Goldstein
Humanist Perspectives: Tom Kellogg and Jim Bole
Humanist Happy Hour: Tom Kellogg
Art Science Cultural Outings: Matthew Elisha
JH Salon: Traci Bickell & Matthew Elisha
Newsletter: Carol Wilson

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