

Manitoba Humanist



Our
September
meeting
features Dr.
Rhonda
Martens
discussing
"Science,
Religion and
Kepler"

SCIENCE AND RELIGION COLLIDE THIS SEPTEMBER

HAM's September meeting will be at Aqua Books, on Garry Street.

Dr. Rhonda Martens from the University of Manitoba will be talking to us about "Science, Religion and Kepler".

Here's a brief description from Dr. Martens:

Tycho Brahe's collection of data was both impressively extensive and accurate, and the sine qua non for Kepler's discovery of the three planetary laws. Nonetheless, Kepler relied heavily on religious arguments as well as Brahe's data in his construction of a model for planetary orbits. In this talk we'll investigate why Kepler

used religious arguments, focusing especially on their role in his discovery of his second law.

Dr. Martens received her Ph.D. in 1997 from the University of Western Ontario, where she worked with Bill Harper. After that she spent two years as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Chicago.

Her primary research area is the history and philosophy of science. She specializes in 16th- and 17th-century astronomy and physics.

She has authored a book on Kepler, entitled "Kepler's Philosophy and the New Astronomy" (Princeton: Princeton University Press,

Published by and for the
Humanist Association of
Manitoba

"We are beyond
belief"

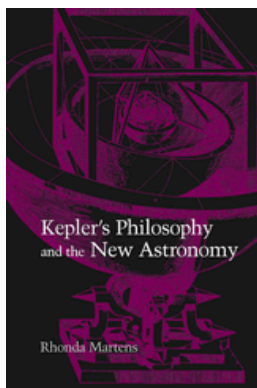


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*Enjoy a nice break on
Labour Day!*

2000), and has also taught courses on Feminist Philosophy, Kant, Leibniz, and basic logic.



Currently, she's working on Reticus, who studied with Copernicus for two years, and also wrote the *Narratio Prima*, which may be the best introduction to date to the Copernican theory. (ed. Note: *Reticus* is a 16th century Austrian mathematician and astronomer. He wrote the *Narratio Prima* in 1540).

Dr. Martens is also looking at Leibniz's optimistic doctrine (that this is the best world possible) and its implications for his philosophy of science.

If you'd like to read more before the meeting, a sample chapter of Dr. Marten's book is available at the following link:

<http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i6961.html>

HAM'S SUMMER PARTY



Our host, Brian Fairbanks

HAM held our Summer Party at the residence of Brian Fairbanks and Jan Guinn, on August 21st. Around twenty members and friends enjoyed the lovely evening and the hospitality of our hosts.

The conversation was brisk and lively (as usual), and the meal was delicious.

Brian and Jan live just steps away from Stonewall Quarry Park, which made for an interesting, short after-dinner walk.

Thanks again!



Happy, relaxed Humanists

HAM'S REVISED DONATION POLICY

The HAM Executive has decided to return to our former practice, and request smaller donations from those attending our regular monthly meetings.

Starting with the September meeting, we'll be passing the "hat", so to speak, among those in attendance. A suggested donation amount is \$2 per person.

However, we'll also be happy to collect larger donations from those who wish to receive a tax receipt.

The money collected will ensure that we continue to have enough funds in the bank to pay for regular meeting spaces.

MASHFEST FILM FESTIVAL

August 15, 2010 marked the first annual Manitoba Atheist, Skeptics and Humanists Film Festival. Featured was Julia Sweeney's inspirational and considered film, "Letting Go of God". Interspersed between segments of this simultaneously serious and humorous work, comedic clips from the internet, such as Mr. Deity, were shown.

101 souls attended this historical event. The age range was from around 10 to around eighty. From the level of the applause and the amount of laughter, it appeared they enjoyed themselves immensely. Some people became aware of and connected with a community that would not shun them for their free-thinking. Members of the Humanist Association of Manitoba were on hand to welcome those in the process of examining their beliefs.



Film Fest volunteers Diana Goods, Heather McDonell and Donna Harris

Four fortunate people went home with door and raffle prizes. The prizes included, a "Penn Says" DVD on religion (donated by Jeff Olsson), a Film Fest commemorative T-shirt, and two excellent books (donated by Diane Goods). The books were "Your Inner Fish: A Journey into the 3.5-Billion-Year History of the Human Body" by Neil Shubin and "Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History" by Stephen J. Gould; both good reads.

(Ed. Note: It's been noted that neither volume is available in the Humanist Association of Manitoba library. That lack will be corrected!)

Between admission, which was by donation, and the raffle, \$325 was raised for next year's film festival. Coordination meetings for next year's events will be held starting in the autumn. If you are interested in helping to organize the 2011 MASH Film Festival, please contact Jeff Olsson at [jdolsson @ \(at\) shaw.ca](mailto:jdolsson@shaw.ca).

Anyone interested in acquiring a copy of Jeff's book, "Leaving Faith Behind", can also send an email to him at the same address. A few commemorative T-shirts of the first ever Manitoba atheist film festival are available for \$10 each! (*ed: quite a bargain!...*) Contact Myrna Donald at [muirned @ \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:muirned@gmail.com).

- Myrna Donald

2010 VALLEY FREETHOUGHT CONVENTION IS DAYS AWAY!

If you weren't aware, our fellow freethinkers to the south are hosting their first ever Convention on September 18, 2010.

The Red River Freethinkers are hosting a day-long event at the Radisson Hotel in Fargo, ND. And to add to the value, more free events have recently been added on the day before, Friday, September 17th.

Guest Speakers include **PZ Myers** (if you missed him here last January, now's your chance!), and "Mr. Deity" himself, **Brian Keith Dalton**. For the complete list of speakers and events check out the official convention website at www.project42convention.org.

SKEPTICAMP - WINNIPEG

(Ed: I know, I know, I've run this before. But it's still worth repeating!!)

A new local group, Winnipeg Skeptics, is holding our city's first ever Skepticamp this fall.

The event is scheduled for Saturday, October 23rd, 2010, with details such as location and exact time still to be determined.

However, it's not too early to sign up, because YOU can help decide on the event's content.

SkeptiCamps differ from ordinary seminars in that they are informal, community-organized conferences borne from the desire for people to share and learn in an open environment. Everyone from casual skeptics to the experienced participate, give talks and get to know each other.

SkeptiCamp emphasizes the participation of everyone, from the first-time speaker to the experienced hand. For this event, consider giving a presentation on a topic that drives your passion for science and skepticism. Alternatively, help with the event's organization. At the very least, be an active participant and engage the speakers and your fellow attendees.

If you're interested in attending or even signing up to give a presentation, here is the contact information you need:

Website:

http://skepticamp.org/wiki/SkeptiCamp_Winnipeg

Jeff Olsson has already signed up, as have Grant Rogerson and myself, so come on out and join us!

It's an opportunity to learn more about skepticism in action

- Donna Harris

COMING OUT OF THE ATHEIST CLOSET

Why can't we?

For many people, publicly admitting that they are a non-believer, a non-theist, an atheist or a secular humanist is something they just cannot do.

A political hopeful recently knocked on our door. During the conversation, we mentioned that we were part of the Humanist Association of Manitoba, which led to a description of humanism, because the individual wasn't sure

what humanism was.

Once we started talking, the fellow said "you know, the worst people I've had to deal with in my life, were religious", and once he learned exactly what a humanist was, he went on to add that humanism is basically what he believed, but that he'd never admit it publicly.

It is incredibly sad that, in this day and age, being religious is still automatically being equated with being a good or moral person, with the opposite also being true, that atheists are considered not trustworthy, or lacking in morals.

It's not right that nonbelievers are unwilling to state their beliefs for the public record, for fear of being harrassed, or losing business or an election, or even their jobs.

So, what's an appropriate way to announce our beliefs publicly?

Do we just announce our opinions to everyone we see? Do we wear t-shirts or buttons that proclaim our beliefs? Do we loudly proclaim that religion is for other people, and we know better? Or do we even (horrors) walk up to people at the food court in the mall and ask them if they've heard the good news about reason and rational thinking?

While it's sometimes hard to start the conversation, especially with family and friends, perhaps it's time to have a straight forward talk. Maybe it's time to ask those closest to us what their thoughts are, and to state our position clearly and without apologies.

Do you find it difficult to share your point of view? Have you had a note-worthy experience? – positive or negative? Or do you completely disagree with what I've written?

Please email me with your comment or story at ham_librarian (at) yahoo.com, and I'll publish the responses in the next newsletter.

- Donna Harris

COOL WEB LINK OF THE MONTH

I found this link on a blog not too long ago, and I thought it was a fascinating graphical representation.

It's a graphic showing the relative heights from the tallest mountain on Earth (Mount Everest, of course, at 29,029 feet), all the way to the farthest depths of the ocean:

<http://www.ouramazingplanet.com/infographic-tallest-mountain-to-deepest-ocean-trench-0249/>

As you scroll down, there are lots of interesting bits of trivia on the way. Enjoy!

THE LAST LAUGH

During these serious times, people of all faiths should remember these four religious truths:

1. Muslims do not recognize Jews as God's chosen people.
2. Jews do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.
3. Protestants do not recognize the Pope as the leader of the Christian world.
4. Baptists do not recognize each other at Hooters.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, September 11, 2010

Monthly Meeting

Location: Aqua Books, 274 Garry Street

Time: Meet & Greet: 5:30 p.m.

Presentation: 6:00 p.m.

Speaker/Topic: Rhonda Martens, "Science, Religion and Kepler"

NOTE: This meeting is a non-meal event.

However, there will be an optional dinner in the on-site restaurant (the Eat! Bistro) to start no later than 7:15 p.m.

Saturday, September 18, 2010

Red River Valley 2010 Freethought Convention

Red River Freethinkers

Location: **Radisson Hotel, Fargo, ND (** NEW VENUE**)**

Speakers: **Brian Keith Dalton**, "Mr. Deity"; **PZ Myers**, the writer of Pharyngula himself; **Dan Barker**, co-president of the Freedom of Religion Foundation; **Annie Laurie Gaylor**, co-president of the Freedom of Religion Foundation; and **August Berkshire**, local atheist heavyweight who was the first president of the Twin Cities Chapter of American Atheists.

Saturday, October 16, 2010

Monthly Meeting

Location: Canad Inn Polo Park, 1405 St.

Matthews Avenue

Time: TBA

Speaker/Topic: the Rainbow Resource Centre
(NB: The date of the October meeting was changed to avoid the Thanksgiving long weekend)

Saturday, November 13, 2010

Monthly Meeting

Location: TBA

Speaker/Topic: TBA

Executive:

Jeff Olsson, President
Neil Schipper, Vice President
Helen Friesen, Treasurer
Heather McDonell, Secretary

Members at Large:

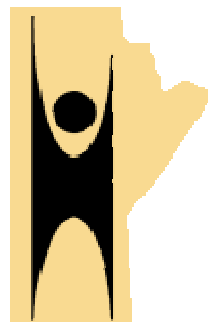
Myrna Donald
Barry Hammond
Donna Harris
Katie Higham
Jake Peters
Grant Rogerson
Sophie Shulman
Marlene Wallace
Barrie Webster

Newsletter Editor:
Donna L. Harris
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We're on the Web!

See us at:

mb.humanists.ca



Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanist Association of Manitoba

New Member Renewal

Membership Category:

- Individual Membership \$25.00
- Individual Limited Income \$10.00
- Household Membership* \$45.00
- Household Limited Income \$15.00

* After July 1st, just pay ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year.
After October 31st, pay full fee - includes the entire next year.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code _____

Telephone#: _____ Cell #: _____

Email address: _____

*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

DONATION (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HAM of:

- \$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100
- Other: _____

PAYMENT: Cheque Money Order
 Visa Mastercard Amex

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. _____

Expiry Date: ____/____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Please make cheque or money order payable to:
Humanist Association of Manitoba and mail to:
*Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane,
Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Or bring your form and the fees to any HAM meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.