



# DISCOVER SDIS

san diego independent scholars

**Fanebust**, who joined SDIS in the mid-'80s and has served as Treasurer, has maintained his membership even though he left San Diego for his native South Dakota in 1993. He summarizes his essay, "The Historical Frontier", as follows:

*"To define the frontier, the American West, one must consider both a time and a place, but neither would be meaningful if the people who ventured into the wild land were not included in the definition. It was a volatile mix of humanity that chose the frontier, an optimistic combination that included the hopeful and the desperate, the reverent and the outlaw. They all came with their visions of better life than the one they left behind in Europe or the eastern cities of America. Some faced the challenge with a "nothing to lose attitude" and others with an "everything to gain" posture. With the freedom guaranteed by the U. S. Constitution at their backs, and the knowledge that throughout human history courageous people had stepped away from the ruins of their past, and turned into the mysterious unknown, the adventurers looked toward the West, trusting in their God, in their dreams and in their own fierce determination to prosper on the land be it the prairie, the plains or mountains."*

## SCHOLARS NOTEBOOK

**MAY 20, 2017. . . 1:30**

► The concluding meeting of the SDIS 2016-2017 year will feature the three-part American Frontier project by members Wayne Fanebust, Sam Gusman, and Gerry Horwitz. Their three essays represent aspects of the topic and will be further summarized May 20 and then discussed. The complete essays can be read on the SDIS website—under "Projects."

► Also: Election of Officers and Board Members

**Gusman**, a member since 2006, has served as both President and Executive Vice President of SDIS. He also originated both the Colloquy Cafe and the Culture 2 Study Groups. "Antecedents and Consequences" is his contribution to the American Frontier Project:

*"Before the War of Independence, the British colonies in America were not encouraged to expand westward. The War of Independence changed everything, thus setting the stage for the long westward march of the frontier to begin. As stated by Turner in his famous essay, The Significance of the Frontier in American History (1893), 'In the crucible of the frontier, the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics.' Now, many years later, that story of transformation from immigrant to American at the frontier can be viewed nostalgically and particularly for what it was. Alternatively, in a more inclusive way, it can be viewed as context for any people who become Americanized by traveling with resoluteness and hope toward fulfilling their personal dreams in and as part of American citizenry."*

**Horwitz** joined SDIS in 1985 and has served as both Newsletter Editor and Program Chairman. She addresses "The Frontier as Cultural Myth" thusly:

*"This essay is an investigation of the ways in which the exploration and development of America's vast territory has seeped into the national consciousness. Regarded as perpetual growth and progress for the nation as well as progress for those who braved the lack of civilization to strike out anew, what this spirit of daring and adventure meant, and still means, has been the subject of historians, of novelists, of travel accounts, of exhibitions and entertainments and of music. The frontier has also become a metaphor for other types of challenge and exploration, principally but not exclusively, scientific and technological."*

## FUTURE MEETINGS:

SDIS does not meet during the summer months, June, July, and August.

## ■ STUDY GROUPS ■

*Meeting Details - Page 4*

### COLLOQUY CAFÉ

We discussed "conscience" today and decided that everyone has her or his own ideas of what is right or wrong. Even within a single family, there could be controversies over what's right and what's wrong. For example, an honor killing could be considered a conscience thing to do. Conscience isn't frozen in time. It can be altered to "fit in with your society," even if you may need to alter your ideas of right and wrong. Conscience is malleable. People who appear to be without a conscience like Ted Bundy or Charles Manson must have alternate types of conscience, perhaps believing they are doing the right thing. For May 17, our topic will be "virtual reality."

MARY ELLEN STRATTHAUS

### CULTURE ONE

CULTURE ONE will meet next on Thursday, May 11th, 2:00 - 4:00 PM, Signature Rm Vi.

We are getting acclimated to our new book, *HOMO DEUS*, by Harari. Most members have access to a copy of the book; others can probably borrow one from a member of the group. Everyone should have read the first half of the initial chapter, "The New Human Agenda," which summarizes the accomplishments of *Homo Sapiens* as of today. These pages, "Homo Deus Intro," are available upon request, see below.

Now we are being introduced to the new, daring goals of humans in the second half of this chapter, namely, making a serious bid toward immortality, happiness, and divinity. Our discussion will be centered on the challenge of avoiding death, how this is defined, rationalized, and operationalized, its challenges and opportunities. Who's in favor, who is not, and by what means.

Next, we find that the second big human project described by Harari is finding the key to happiness. A related issue is whether happiness is defined as an individual, personal quest or a governmental, collective project. Addressing some historical examples, such as schools, health and welfare system, provides a context for viewing changes in these individual and/or organizational goals. Limitations in obtaining and preserving happiness are also explored. In fact, the question emerges as to whether humans' seeking of bliss and immortality is in fact trying to upgrade themselves into gods. Much to grasp, explain, discuss, including whether to venture toward such goals: for what?

Is this inevitable or optional? A fine program for our study group, with perhaps some time to address other issues.

For information about our readings, references, or inviting guests to attend our meetings, please contact Sue R. Rosner, email: [rosnersue@gmail.com](mailto:rosnersue@gmail.com)

SUE ROSNER

### FILM GROUP

The Film Group will meet Wednesday, June 7 at 10 a.m. at the home of Barbara Heckler. We'll watch *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter ...and Spring*, a 2003 South Korean film about a Buddhist monastery on a lake in a pristine forest. This quiet film depicts the life of a monk as he passes through the seasons of his life from childhood to old age. The film has been included in some lists of great movies. Contact [bheckler@san.rr.com](mailto:bheckler@san.rr.com) for more information. The film group plans to meet in July and August. Email Barbara if you would like to be put on a reminder contact list.

BARBARA HECKLER

### LITERATURE GROUP

On Monday, May 22, the literature group is meeting at Judith Meyer's home to read and discuss Tennessee Williams' last play, *A House Not Meant to Stand: A Gothic Comedy* (1982). Williams called this dark comedy a "Southern Gothic spook sonata." He died 9 months after the play was first produced at the Goodman Theater in Chicago.

We meet at 10:30 a.m. and have lunch and dessert afterwards (bring your own lunch; Judith will provide dessert). Call Judith Meyer (858-652-2293) for directions. Call Larry Gartner (760-751-9479) if you would like to read a part in the play. We are focusing on Act One.

CATHERINE BLECKI

## NEUROSCIENCE STUDY GROUP

The next meeting of the Neuroscience Study Group is scheduled for Tuesday, May 16, 2017 at 2 pm in Bea Rose's apartment #1909 at the Vi. Visitors are welcome but please call Bea Rose first (858) 458-9263) because space is limited.

Reading suggestions are:

1. Chapter 8 in Christof Koch's *Consciousness* in which he expresses his ideas of consciousness and describes information theory and its attributes. There are only two chapters left in this privileged adventure of sharing Koch's brilliance as a scientist and writer-- in which he discusses the future and the ramifications of science on our culture.

2. David Christian's article in Brockman's *This Explains Everything*, p. 174, which discusses 'emergent', a topic Koch refers to in chapter 8.

Time will be given for further discussion of the consequences (ethical and otherwise) of the reported technology using stem cells to create embryos as presented at the last meeting.

If you have read any current articles on these topics, please send a link to the group and/or bring copies to the meeting so they can be discussed.

BEATRICE ROSE



## RESTAURANT GROUPS

### SUPPER WITH SCHOLARS

We are again meeting on the first Thursday of each month, at 6 p.m.. Thus, we will meet next on Thursday, May 4. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to [parkerd1954@gmail.com](mailto:parkerd1954@gmail.com) stating whether you are coming alone or bringing friend(s).

We meet at Humphreys La Jolla Restaurant, 3299 Holiday Court. Meals from the menu ([www.humphreyslajolla.com](http://www.humphreyslajolla.com)) are Dutch Treat. Group discussion is based on suggested topics that have particularly interested the attendees. If possible, we select a question that can be addressed from the viewpoints of the various areas of expertise of the participants, ranging from the humanities to natural sciences to social sciences to various professions.

DAVE PARKER

### JUST LUNCH

Meetings will start again in the Fall.

BARBARA HECKLER

## NOTES: MAN PROPOSES, THE GODS DISPOSE

Seers and Oracles in Ancient Greece  
A Talk by Dr. Michael Sage

*Michael Sage has been awarded an SDIS Research Grant. This fall, he will travel to the University of Cincinnati, to work at the school's extensive classics library. His project relates to the "afterlife" of the Roman Republic – how the idea of a Republic affected the influence of the elite, who typically were the only literate people—and led to the influence of Christianity.*

Greece, as we know it, was created in 1830, after the Greek War of Independence. It was a "cultural concept," in linguistics, and in religious rituals. In 1200, however, the area had been composed of separate political entities. And in the ancient period, around 380 BC, it was part of the great Persian Empire, and known for skills in warfare.

In ancient Greece, warriors would consult the Oracle at Delphi before committing to action. The Oracles provided supernatural sanctions. Would there be a successful outcome? Farmers and fishermen also consulted Oracles. Which Gods required sacrifice? What was the meaning of a flock of birds?

There were Oracle cults related to specific deities. In Greece, magic was a part of everyday life. Seers were thought to be visionaries who could see the future. Their predictions reduced anxiety in making decisions.

The Oracle of Dodona, consulted by Odysseus, was second to Delphi in importance. It was served by female priests, who interpreted responses... There were Oracles in underground caves... And Oracles in springs that induced "Forgetfulness" or "Remembrance."

By late antiquity, those seeking sanctions and predictions went directly to holy people – the “saints.” Many believed that the Gods “entered” into the saints, giving them *enthousiasmos*—divine inspiration.

ARLENE GILBERT



### Nominations for the 2017-2018 SDIS Board

President.....	John Alexander
Executive Vice President.	Michael Seidel
Secretary.....	Judith Sage
Treasurer.....	David Parker
Notebook Editor.....	Arlene Gilbert
Publicity Chair.....	Barbara Heckler
Program Co-Chairs	Alvin Halpern Barbara Heckler

### Submitted by Nominating committee members:

*Betty Boone, Alvin Halpern, Jean Mayer, David Parker, Sally Pollack*

Ballots will be mailed prior to the May meeting.



*President:  
Barbara Heckler: 858-455-6815  
Editor:  
Arlene Gilbert: 858-643-9321*

## STUDY GROUPS TIMES, SITES, CONTACTS

### Colloquy Café

May 17 2017

1:30

At the Vi

Contact: M.E. Stratthaus  
[strattme@san.rr.com](mailto:strattme@san.rr.com)

### Culture One

May 11, 2017

2:00 – 4:00

Signature Room at the Vi

Contact: Sue Rosner  
[rosnersue@gmail.com](mailto:rosnersue@gmail.com)

### Film Group

June 7, 2017

10:00

Home of Barbara Heckler

[bheckler@san.rr.com](mailto:bheckler@san.rr.com)

### Literature Group

May 22, 2017

10:30

Host: Judith Meyer

Phone: 858-652-2293

### Supper With Scholars

May 4, 2017

6:00

Humphrey's

[parkerd1954@gmail.com](mailto:parkerd1954@gmail.com)

### Science Group

May 16, 2017

2:00

At Bea's home at the Vi

Contact: Bea Rose

[beabe@me.com](mailto:beabe@me.com)