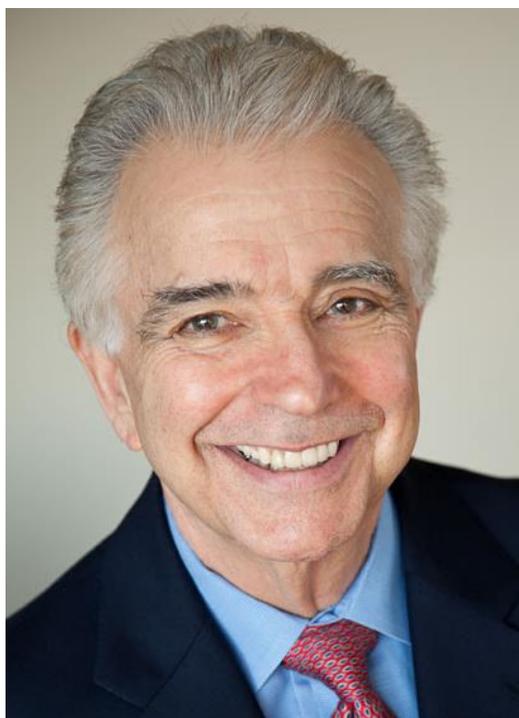




DISCOVER SDIS  
san diego independent scholars

## SCHOLARS NOTEBOOK

October 2019



### Is Donald Trump the New Normal?

Samuel Popkin, Ph.D.

**Saturday, October 19, 1:30 pm, Room 111A  
Chancellor's Complex UCSD**

Samuel Popkin is professor emeritus of political science at the University of California San Diego. Prior to that he taught at Yale, Harvard and the University of Texas. He received his B.S. in Mathematics and Political Science and his Ph.D. in Political Science from MIT.

Dr. Popkin is author of *The Republican Crackup and the Future of Presidential Politics* (forthcoming). He is also author of *The Candidate: What it Takes to Win — and Hold — the White House*. The *New York Times* hailed the book as a “management bible for the business of presidential campaigning” and an Editor’s Choice. The *Washington Post* called it “compelling history” and “a fix for political junkies” and the *Financial Times* compared it to Theodore H White’s “*The Making of the President, 1960*.” Dr. Popkin’s previous book, “*The Reasoning Voter*” has been hailed as a “classic” by Joe Klein in *Time* magazine and is widely cited in Washington. James Carville wrote “If you’re preparing to run a presidential campaign and only have time to read one book, make sure you read Sam Popkin’s *The Reasoning Voter*. If you have time to read two books, read *The Reasoning Voter* twice.”

Dr. Popkin is an active participant as well as an academic analyst of presidential elections. He has consulted for polling, targeting and strategy in the presidential campaigns of Al Gore, Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter and George McGovern and was part of a group of decision theorists advising the Obama campaign in 2012 that was called “The Dream Team” by the *New York Times*. Dr. Popkin also played Ronald Reagan for Jimmy Carter in the practice debates held before the 1980 Carter-Reagan debate. He also consulted for Yougov-Polimetrix on their polling for *The Economist*, and for CBS News on exit polls and the CBS/*New York Times* poll.

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Summary of Dr. Popkin’s Talk  
Photos from Festival of Books

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First theme = MEMOIR

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# Summary: Is Donald Trump the New Normal?

Samuel Popkin

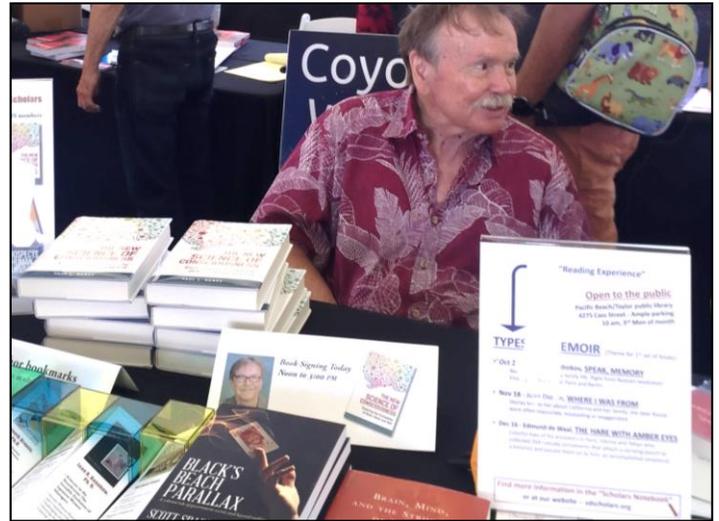
When a man so questionable that he can no longer get a casino license or borrow money from an American bank becomes the nominee of a major political party — and then president -- something has changed in America. Popkin will explain how changes in campaign finance have weakened the ability of the political parties to manage intra-party conflicts and have eroded support for party leaders. This has opened the way for an outsider, with no support from party leaders, proclaiming “I alone can do it”, to win the primary.

Whether or not President Trump wins a second term, Popkin will explain, there is no reason to believe that the country will not face problems in the future from obstructionist factions, self-promoting candidates and billionaires with pet issues.

Super PACs and non-profit groups fueled the rise of single-issue, uncompromising candidates. As a former Congressman put it, “No one’s saying, ‘Here’s \$50 million for a good compromise.’”

# SDIS Table at the Festival of Books

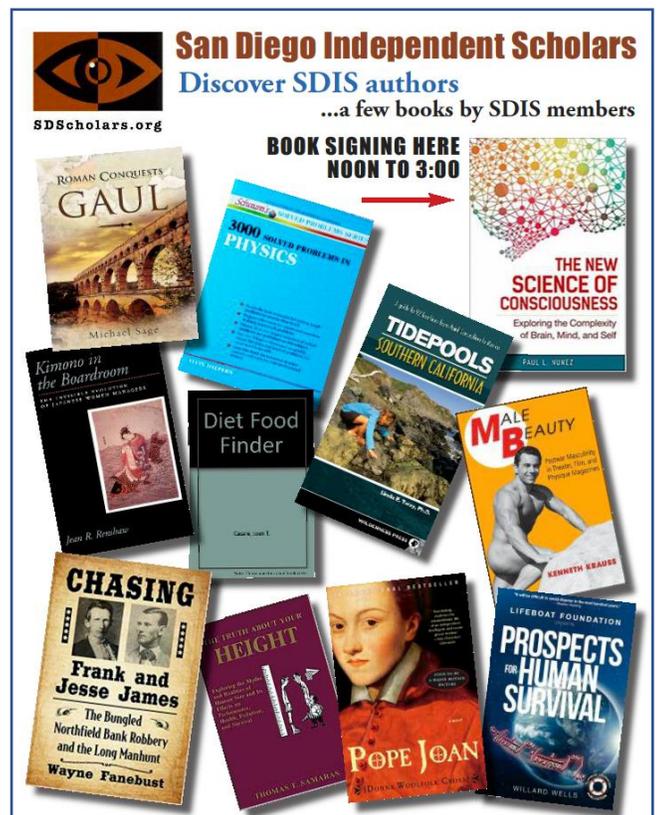
On August 24, 2019, SDIS hosted a table at the San Diego Festival of Books. We had good traffic past our table, distributed several hundred newsletters or fliers, collected information from persons potentially interested in SDIS and celebrated our authors of books.



Book signing by Paul Nunez (Photo by Judy Sage)



Membership information on the SDIS table. (Photo by Judy Sage)



Poster showing covers of books by SDIS members (Poster by Gail Bamber)

SDIS invites YOU to participate in a *NEW*

## **READING EXPERIENCE**

meeting monthly and focusing on a changing series of themes,  
the first of which is

### ***MEMOIR***

To begin, on Monday Oct. 21 at 10 a.m. we will discuss

#### **SPEAK, MEMORY** by Vladimir Nabokov,

the author's warm and moving recollections of his large family and early life in Russia until the Revolution, education in England and emigre life in Paris and Berlin.

The next discussion, Monday Nov. 18 at 10 a.m., will concern

#### **WHERE I WAS FROM** by Joan Didion,

the author's re-evaluation of everything she thought she knew about California and her own family's history in the state since the mid 19th century.

The 3rd discussion, Monday Dec. 16 at 10 a.m., will examine

#### **THE HARE WITH AMBER EYES** by Edmund de Waal,

who reflects upon the lives of his ancestors who assembled and then guarded for several centuries the valuable collection of netsuke (small, intricately carved ornaments used with Japanese kimonos) they passed on to him.

All selections are available in the San Diego Public Library system.

The Pacific Beach branch of San Diego's Public Library system will host these sessions. Located at 4275 Cass Street, the library occupies an entire block and has two parking lots. Cross streets are Thomas and Reed; the library is 1 block south of Grand Avenue.

All discussions are open to the public although the series is sponsored by San Diego Independent Scholars, not by the library.

Gerry Horwitz

# STUDY GROUPS

*Non-members wishing to visit or join a study group are requested to contact SDIS via [sdscholars.org](http://sdscholars.org) or [sandiegoindependentscholars@gmail.com](mailto:sandiegoindependentscholars@gmail.com)*

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**COLLOQUY CAFÉ:** In-depth exploration of one concept each month.  
1:30 pm, third Wednesday of each month

Colloquy Cafe took on morality in August, beginning with the dictionary definition: "conformity to the rules of right conduct" and its synonym: goodness, the discussion continued with a further definition, A negative definition was "refraining from dishonesty, sneakiness, cheating". All agreed that morality is the correct way to address a difficult situation.

But the question "*whose* morality?" brought participants to the realization that morality differs according to individual and cultural norms, that it has to do with human relationships; what is ethical and acceptable depends on the community. The clearest and simplest definition of morality, all agreed, is the biblical one, "Do unto others....."

Addressing the matter from another side, as it were, a consideration of Immorality brought about the agreement that the term brings to mind sexual conduct. This in turn led to the remark that morality involves self-respect.

And another variation, amoral, is not the same as immoral. Laws without morality are in vain, one person commented.

Two persons noted that adding one letter changes morality to mortality, which was chosen for the September.

Gerry Horwitz

Mortality was considered in September. NEVER change your meeting date, even temporarily! Confusion resulting from this group's doing just that caused a quite diminished attendance. However those who *were* present enjoyed an enthusiastic, if wandering, discussion of mortality.

We talked about our individual first realizations, as children, that our own death would eventually occur and then what that meant: why is it necessary for human life to end? This led to a consideration, then and now, of what happens after death. Is there another kind of "existence"? a heaven?

What were we taught about afterlife in our very different childhoods? What were we taught about the existence (or non-existence) of God—and do we still believe those early teachings? How did we re-evaluate them?

This evolved into a discussion of our varying lives and experiences, and led to a very positive result of the small number of attendees: we agreed that we had come to know one another much better than before, and that a consideration of "mortality" had been, not a downer as we had each expected, but actually fun!

We chose as the subject for our next, regularly scheduled, meeting on Wed. Oct 16: "charisma".

Gerry Horwitz

**FILM GROUP:** Film viewing and discussion  
10:00 am, 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month.

The Film Group is not meeting in October. Our next meeting will be November 6.

Our September film was the 1939 French classic *Rules of the Game*., which is a farce/drama about French aristocrats right before World War II. French audiences and critics eagerly anticipated this new film by Jean Renoir, but were enraged at its premier, and the film was a financial disaster. The French government, citing it as morbid, depressing, and a poor influence on French youth, banned the film. Later the Nazis banned a shortened version of the original film.

The film was the most expensive French film at that time. Renoir became famous for his deep-focus cinematography. One reviewer called it “the most complex social criticism ever enacted on the screen.” The film is so esteemed today that it is called a masterpiece of world cinema. It is frequently taught in college film classes.

One of the “rules” of the game is that everyone lies. The heroine relates that everyone has lied to her about the affair her husband has had throughout their marriage. Her friend consoles her with the following: *“That’s also part of the times. Today everybody lies. Pharmaceutical fliers, governments, the radio, the movies, the newspapers. So why shouldn’t simple people like us lie as well?”*

Sounds like those lines were written today!

Barbara Heckler

## **GENERAL RELATIVITY Study Group:** Reading *Gravity* by James Hartle

The General Relativity group met on Aug. 21 and Sept 11, when we discussed some of the most exciting phenomena. From Ch.17 we saw that the large galactic clusters are at rest relative to the homogeneous and isotropic microwave background radiation. This implies that the expansion of the universe can be thought of as a membrane in which the galactic clusters are like fixed dots. As the membrane expands uniformly over its expanse, the relative distances of the galaxies from each other stays the same, but the absolute separations increase due to the membrane expansion.

It turns out that such a model is a solution of Einstein's equations if we can assume that the mass and radiation of the universe is uniform throughout. This, it turns out, is a good approximation.(Ch. 18). There are three possible spatial solutions: closed universe (the 3-d surface of a hypersphere) , flat space (like Euclidian geometry), and a 3-d hyperboloid space. The first has a finite size and can lead to eventual collapse under the right conditions. The other two lead to infinite expansion.

If one further assumes that matter and radiation interact with each other only weakly, as well as with the "vacuum energy" (another contributor to energy that arises because of the cosmological constant in Einstein's equations) - a reasonable assumption in today's universe - then we can actually determine the time evolution of the universe by knowing just four quantities at the present time: the energy density of mass, the energy density of radiation, the energy density of the vacuum energy, and Hubble's constant. Particularly, we can determine which of the three models (closed, flat, or open) represents our universe, and whether the universe expands forever, or contracts into the big crunch.

We can measure the Hubble's constant and estimate the radiation density observationally. The energy density of mass would be quite well known if we knew the dark matter contribution, but we don't know that. Similarly, we don't know the vacuum energy. It should further be noted that the assumption that these energies don't interact, while being reasonable at the present time, is totally unreasonable for the early universe. Indeed, the very early universe requires quantum mechanical considerations to be fully understood, but there is no comprehensive theory that includes both general relativity and quantum mechanics.

Ch. 19 notes that while we don't know two of the four quantities (above) needed to understand the time evolution of the universe, we can learn much from effects of the large-scale structure of the universe, as well as from the microwave background radiation. From the former, observations are most consistent with the flat space model. From the latter, we can conclude that there must have been an inflationary period in the early universe, one in which the expansion was exponential for a short time. I can't do justice to these arguments in such a short summary.

We are next meeting on Oct. 16, same time same place. We will start with Ch.20, the arduous mathematical journey to formally developing the Einstein Equations of General Relativity.

Alvin Halpern

**SUPPER WITH SCHOLARS:** Dinner discussion  
6:00 pm, Thursday, Oct. 3  
Humphreys Grill in La Jolla near UCSD  
3299 Holiday Court, La Jolla, CA.  
Meals from the menu are Dutch Treat.  
(See [www.humphreyslajolla.com](http://www.humphreyslajolla.com))

Because restaurant reservations are needed,  
please RSVP >2days in advance to  
[parkerd1954@gmail.com](mailto:parkerd1954@gmail.com)  
**OPEN TO NON-MEMBERS**

Group discussion is based on suggested topics that have particularly interested the attendees in the last month. The subject is selected each meeting by vote of those present. We try to select a question that can be addressed from the differing viewpoints of the various areas of expertise of the participants, which are ordinarily quite diverse, ranging from the humanities to natural sciences to social sciences to various professions.

Dave Parker

## **October 2019 Events**

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**Thurs, Oct. 3, 6 pm,** Humphrey's Grill  
3299 Holiday Court 92037  
**Supper with Scholars**  
**dinner discussion**  
open to non-members

**Wed, Oct. 16, 10 am,** usual location  
**General Relativity**  
Ch. 20 of *Gravity* by Hartle

**Sat, Oct. 19, 1:30 pm,** Rm 111A,  
Chancellor's Complex, UCSD  
**Dr. Samuel Popkin**  
**Is Trump the New Normal?**  
open to non-members

**Mon, Oct. 21, 10 am,** Pacific Beach  
Public Library; 4275 Cass St.  
**Reading Experience:**  
*Speak, Memory* by Nabokov

**Wed, Oct. 23, 1:30 pm,** usual location  
**Colloquy Cafe**  
Concept = "**Charisma**"

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### **CULTURE ONE:**

The Culture Group has concluded its consideration of Contemporary China and is currently deciding on a topic for the future.

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### **NEUROSCIENCE:**

Having completed reading of *The Consciousness Instinct* by Michael Gazzaniga, the Neuroscience Group is choosing a new direction.

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## **Looking Forward**

**Sat, Nov. 16, 1:30 pm,** Rm 111A,  
Chancellor's Complex, UCSD  
**Dr. Tracy Love, UCSD**  
**Language processing in**  
**normal and impaired persons**  
open to non-members

**Sun, Dec. 8, HOLIDAY PARTY**