NOTE: No general meeting and lecture in May

SDIS strives to promote opportunities for active learning and scholarship, for its members and for the San Diego community.

Public service activities of SDIS include free public lectures and cooperative educational projects with other organizations. SDIS members enjoy a variety of regular discussion groups, presently via Zoom.

SDIS, established in 1982, was instrumental in the founding of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars, an organization that unites eight similar organizations and has international membership.

The Scholars Notebook is issued monthly during the academic year, except December, by the San Diego Independent Scholars.

For more information see https://sdscholars.org or contact sdisask@gmail.com
For the first time in three years, the Biosciences Group will try an in-person meeting at 1:00 pm on May 12 in the home of David and Dorothy Parker. Please RSVP to Dorothy Parker or sdisask@gmail.com, because we need to plan for light refreshments and chair arrangements.

The May agenda will include the choosing of future discussion topics from a list of suggestions contributed by group members, who are currently exchanging ideas and references by email. If time permits, we will also begin preliminary exploration of one of those subjects, but there is also a desire that we exchange introductions and information about ourselves since several of us have never met face-to-face before.

In April, the group discussed a recently discovered mechanism that efficiently washes the space between brain cells, rapidly removing toxic metabolites and replenishing substances needed for neural repair and maintenance. This process involves the glymphatic system, which is unique to the brain and is active almost exclusively during deep sleep characterized by “delta slow wave” neural oscillations (<3.2-4 Hz). We considered the glymphatic system’s unusual properties and how they might contribute to our need for sleep, both by allowing us to wake up feeling refreshed and by removing neurodegeneration-related substances such as amyloid-beta.

If you are interested, generally, in questions that link psychology with neuroscience, we welcome you to the Biosciences Group. For information, contact Dorothy Parker or sdisask@gmail.com

Dorothy Parker

READING EXPERIENCE

10 a.m. — Third Monday — May 15 — via Zoom

We will discuss works of Maira Kalman, a contemporary author and illustrator. These include The Principles of Uncertainty and My Favorite Things, as well as the children’s book, Next Stop Grand Central.

Gerry Horwitz

COLLOQUY CAFE

1:30 p.m.—Wednesday, May 17 —— via Zoom

On the usual third Wednesday afternoon of the month, which next will be May 17, at 1:30, discussants will come together to analyze the expression, The Good Life. What are the elements that make up this experience? How can we, how should we, how do we know if we are living the good life.

Last month, we enjoyed analyzing Humor.

Gerry Horwitz
WORKS IN PROGRESS  
1 p.m. — Thursday — May 18 — in person

The May meeting of Works in Progress will convene at 1:00 p.m. instead of its usual time of 3:00. This change allows access to the Art Studio at Vi at La Jolla, where Caroline Morse will lead a hands-on art experience of the type covered in her manuscript. Caroline will provide materials needed for the demonstration, but those who wish to do so may contribute a nominal amount to help defray her expenses.

Caroline’s book summarizes the lives and thoughts of a series of mystics representing various religious and secular traditions. Its novel approach is that it provides a procedure whereby everyone in a group can create a painting or drawing depicting what is most meaningful to him/her about a particular mystic. The intent is not to create a great work of art, but rather to explore one’s reactions.

Caroline has already successfully used a shorter version of this manuscript in several sessions with church and community groups. The featured mystic for Works in Progress on May 18 will be St. Francis.

We hope that you can attend this unusual opportunity. Enrollment is limited to 10 people on a first-come, first-served basis. Please RSVP to Dorothy Parker or sdisask@gmail.com.

In our meeting last month, Jaime Pineda first described the main concepts in his new book Controlling Mental Chaos: Harnessing the Power of the Creative Mind (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, in press). Julia Stroud then led a lively discussion of the clever play (Monkey Mind Madness) that Jaime is writing based on that book. The range of participant comments illustrated the value of a group containing individuals with widely different backgrounds and perspectives.

Dorothy Parker

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FILM GROUP  
10 a.m. PROMPTLY — Wednesday — May 3

The Film Group, in its continuing series of movie musicals, will screen “Meet Me in St. Louis,” the 1944 MGM production that created a template for postwar pictures. Shot in deeply saturated technicolor on lavishly decorated backlot and soundstage sets, the film utilized a cast drawn from the expansive stable of studio character actors, who had become regular fixtures in so many films, all of them capably supporting one of the great talents on whom MGM would rely for 15 years, Judy Garland.

Although filmed toward the end of the War, “Meet Me in St. Louis” takes place just after the turn of the century, during the 1903 Louisiana Purchase World’s Fair, some four decades earlier. Filled with some fine music and ample servings of nostalgia for the era when long-distance phone calls were new, trolley cars had become the chief means of local transport, and whalebone corsets remained primary garments, the film was nominated for several Oscars and song classics, including “The Boy Next Door,” “The Trolley Song,” and “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.” This was director Vincente Minelli’s third film and established him as one of Louis B. Mayer’s favorite directors. Because the film runs slightly longer than some of the previous musicals, we ask members to log on ten minutes prior to 10 am.

Barbara Heckler and Ken Krauss
This month’s SDIS Inside Politics Study Group Agenda will lead off with an unlikely pair of topics - the surprise firing of two of the most successful cable news political anchors on television. Perhaps the most shocking of the weekend victims was Fox News’ Tucker Carlson, the runaway ratings leader whose nightly audience was averaging over three million viewers, more than three times the number of his closest competitors.

When Carlson signed off at the end of his telecast on Friday night, April 21, he told his audience he would see all of them on Monday evening, his next show. Little did Tucker know he would be fired over the weekend, and would not be given the opportunity to say goodbye to his loyal and faithful audience. Carlson’s influence on the conservative political dialogue of the country was never in dispute after the passing of Rush Limbaugh in 2021. He had a style all his own, and my wife correctly described it as more acting than anything.

It is safe to make the observation that Tucker Carlson is the most popular Republican in America today, perhaps surpassed only by Donald Trump himself. Indeed, many GOP voters would like to see Carlson now announce his own candidacy for the presidency in 2024. So why was such a leader of the conservative movement and successful television ratings champion so unceremoniously dumped from his throne on Fox News? We will be discussing that question at the beginning of our study group on Saturday, May 13, the date of our next regular monthly political discussion class.

The day after Tucker Carlson’s surprise firing, the political world was hit with the second shock wave of that weekend - the dismissal of Don Lemon by his employer CNN. I still remember approximately several decades ago my twin brother calling me on the telephone from his home in Michigan to tell me about a dynamic new announcer on CNN named Don Lemon. I turned on Lemon’s TV show that night to see a young new African American newsman with an engaging personality all his own. I would then watch Don Lemon for many years on CNN, not only on his own program but on the ground during literally dozens of live news events around the country.

Lemon was clearly one of the most recognizable faces on cable television every evening. Although Don was transferred to a morning show with two female newswomen a few months ago, there was no indication the transfer was related to anything other than an attempt to create a new morning lineup buzz for CNN. So we will try to analyze the reason for Lemon’s sudden dismissal by the popular cable network. Of course, our class will also discuss the other hot political issues of the day listed on our monthly Agenda

Al Korobkin

SDIS is pleased to announce that Diana Withee has been awarded $1000 to use for her May trip to Europe. She will present a paper at the International Bosch Conference, to be held at the Jheronimus Bosch Art Center in the Netherlands. This year’s conference is titled “Defining Boundaries: Jheronimus Bosch, his workshop and his followers.”

She will combine this year’s grant with a $500 grant she received in 2020 which she was unable to use because of covid. She will also review a Bosch-related manuscript in Berlin and a related manuscript in Turin.

2023 Hawkins Grant Awarded to Diana Withee

Barbara Heckler

SDIS is pleased to announce that Diana Withee has been awarded $1000 to use for her May trip to Europe. She will present a paper at the International Bosch Conference, to be held at the Jheronimus Bosch Art Center in the Netherlands. This year’s conference is titled “Defining Boundaries: Jheronimus Bosch, his workshop and his followers.”

She will combine this year’s grant with a $500 grant she received in 2020 which she was unable to use because of covid. She will also review a Bosch-related manuscript in Berlin and a related manuscript in Turin.
The Physical Sciences Group zoom met on Wed. April 26, at 2pm after having skipped the April 12 meeting date. At this meeting we reviewed the examples of scattering in Quantum Electrodynamics (QED) that we had previously studied, to make sure we understood them in detail. These included electron positron annihilation into a muon anti-muon pair, both exploring the cross sections when no information about the particular initial and final spin state are given, and for the more specific cases where the helicities of the initial states are given. We then extended the analysis to electron positron annihilation into the tau anti-tau lepton pair, and showed how the results can lead to experimental determination of the tau mass. We further extended the analysis where the outgoing particles are quark antiquark pairs.

In this latter case, the strong interactions lead to outgoing particles to immediately form mesons (and with enough energy, other hadrons), but the basic cross section formulas are the same, taking into account the differing charges on the quarks and the fact that each quark comes in three varieties called color. This latter fact leads the cross sections to be multiplied by a simple factor of three, since QED is unable to distinguish them. The resulting experimental verification of this fact is an important demonstration of the validity of quantum chromodynamics (QCD) which is the presently accepted theory of the strong interactions.

Finally we discussed the cross section for creating a bound state of a muon anti-muon pair (very similar to a hydrogen atom, except that the electron and proton are replaced by a negative and positively charged muon). The cross section is determined by using the non-relativistic bound state approximation (from the Schrödinger Equation). In effect, we add the contributions of all the momentum space components of that wave function to the cross section. The result is proportional to the probability of the muon anti-muon pair spatially overlapping. We noted that the muon anti-muon pair can decay back into an electron positron pair, and related the decay rate for that happening to the cross section for its creation.

The next zoom meeting will take place on Wed. May 10 at 2pm, when we will extend our review to Compton scattering and comparison with the results from classical and single particle quantum mechanical calculations. We will also move on to higher order Feynman diagrams in Chapter 6, leading to the "radiative corrections", such as the Lamb shift and the anomalous magnetic moment of the electron, demonstrating the extreme accuracy of QED in describing the world around us.

Alvin Halpern

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