SATURDAY September 16, 1:30 pm via ZOOM
SDIS Monthly Lecture

Hieronymus Bosch -- by Diana K. Withee

Diana Keeran Withee is an art historian doing research on the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch for more than a decade, based on discoveries she made about the painter while a graduate student.

She received a B.A. in Art History from Pomona College, Claremont, CA, an M.A. from Tulane University, New Orleans, LA and a Ph.D.ABD from University of Maryland, College Park.

Diana worked in the education departments at the National Gallery of Art and Hillwood Museum and Gardens in Washington, DC and in Curatorial at The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD.

She has taught art history courses at Tulane University, New Orleans, LA and Montgomery College in Rockville, MD and at the Bishops Schools, La Jolla, CA and for the Navy through their Central Texas College program, which included teaching art history on an aircraft carrier.
The Scholars Notebook is issued monthly during the academic year, except December, by the San Diego Independent Scholars.

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.

For more information see https://sdscholars.org or contact sdisask@gmail.com
Can mental states influence the efficacy of our immune system?

Might an overactive or chronic immune response alter our mental health?

This summer, the Biosciences Group began a several-month exploration of links between the brain and the immune system. We are currently considering whether an activated immune response can affect neurological diseases or mental states.

September’s discussion will be based on a list of thought-provoking questions contributed by several members. Some of these questions include:

1. Can depression be worsened by immunity-related substances that promote “sickness behavior” – a condition characterized by reduced physical activity, social withdrawal, altered sleep patterns, and reduced food intake? Is the partial resemblance between the symptoms of depression and those of sickness behavior a coincidence or something more?

2. Is there a relationship between maternal immune activation and the development of brain disorders such as autism? What about schizophrenia and an overactive immune response during adolescence?

3. Certain brain cells -- called microglia -- are crucial to both (a) neural development and (b) immune protection against infection or trauma within the brain. Could infection divert the microglia away from developmental functions and prioritize immune ones, impairing neurodevelopment?

An agenda of discussion questions is distributed to members before each session. Requisite background will be briefly summarized below each question on that agenda, which will be accompanied by a glossary and pertinent references.

Participants are requested to read references that best fit their background knowledge. One strength of the group is that its members have diverse areas of expertise and educational focus, leading to interesting differences in viewpoint.

The Bioscience Group convenes at 1:00 on the 2nd Friday of each month, with the next meeting being on September 8. If you are not on the group’s mailing list, you can request to visit a meeting by contacting sdisask@gmail.com or Dorothy Parker.

Visitors and new members are welcome.

Dorothy Parker
After taking a break this summer, SDIS Inside Politics Zoom Study Group will resume on Saturday, September 9, at 10:00 a.m. Last week the unofficial 2024 presidential election season began with the first Republican debate, televised nationally by Fox News. For the next four months, there will be several televised debates for both major political parties. Beginning in January 2024, presidential primaries and caucuses will be held in several states for about five or six months. These events more or less follow the usual presidential election season procedure.

What is startlingly different this election season is the fact that former President Trump, the GOP candidate for President on the Republican ticket, has been the subject of four criminal indictments, two federal and two state indictments, including almost one hundred felony charges. Whether we like Trump or not, we will probably be speaking about Trump and the indictments against him many times during our monthly Study Group Zoom meetings. Will Trump be found guilty of the charges against him? When will the trials against Trump be held? What effect will the indictments against Trump have on Trump’s presidential campaign? If Trump is convicted of any of the crimes alleged in the indictments, what effect will such a conviction have on the election?

Another distinguishing feature of the 2024 election season is that the majority of voters in the country do not want either Trump or President Biden to be running for President. I do not believe this situation has ever occurred in the past.

I hope many of you will join our Zoom Study Group beginning on Saturday September 9 at 10:00 a.m. Once you join our class, every month I will send you an Agenda for the meeting, and the Zoom Link for you to click on to join the class. If you are already a member of the Study Group, you will automatically receive the new Agenda and the Zoom Link. History will definitely be watching this election, and I hope you will decide to join our political discussion group.

Al Korobkin
WORKS IN PROGRESS
3 p.m.— Thursday — September 28 — via Zoom

At 3:00 on Thursday, September 28, the Works in Progress Group will resume its monthly meetings after summer vacation. This date is one week later than our usual 3rd Thursday of the month meeting because the presenter, Tom Vazakas, will be out of town earlier.

Tom has written the following to describe his project:

Efficient Delivery of Mindfulness:
A New Method of Mindfulness Training and Practice That Excels in the Run of Daily Life

Have you never had a difficult or disturbing thing arising in the mind (DDTA)? DDTAs are just as natural as mind-wandering—it’s just what minds do. That DDTAs are natural makes them no less disturbing or uncomfortable, however. Moreover, our usual, unmindful response to a DDTA—such as retracting from it, or trying to get rid of it, control it, or fix it in one way or another—exponentially exacerbates any discomfort from the original, underlying DDTA. The Efficient Delivery of Mindfulness (EDM) practice circumvents this by offering an alternative relationship to DDTAs by verbally (i) noting the DDTA’s presence, and (ii) giving the DDTA experience permission to your having it. By this succinctness of EDM’s practice and the conciseness of EDM’s training, and because of EDM’s exceptional portability, EDM excels as a mindfulness practice for the run of daily life.

The Works in Progress Group is designed for persons engaged in scholarly or artistic endeavors, as well as others who would like to learn about those projects. It strives to provide a sounding board within a supportive and friendly atmosphere that will be stimulating to all participants.

Although it contains a core of regular attendees, Works in Progress is open to any SDIS member, potential SDIS member, or outside expert in the field being discussed.

If you are not currently on the Works in Progress mailing list, but wish to obtain the Zoom link for a meeting, along with additional information about the presentation and presenter, contact sdisask@gmail.com or Dorothy Parker to receive the group’s monthly announcements.

We hope that you will join us for this inspiring topic and discussion.

Dorothy Parker
Continuing with our concentration on The Short Story, our focus for the September meeting will be on a master, Scott Fitzgerald. At our usual 10 a.m. Zoom on each month’s third Monday, this month the 18th, we will analyze three of his stories. Two are fantasies published in 1922: “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” (ignore the movie if you’ve seen it) and “The Diamond As Big As the Ritz”. The third, from his more mature period and based on his life experience, is the 1931 “Babylon Revisited.”

We analyzed two stories by Salinger in July, “A Perfect Day for Bananafish”, perhaps his most well-known short, and the bittersweet “For Esme With Love and Squalor”. In August we concentrated on three short but thought-provoking stories by Shirley Jackson: her shocking “The Lottery”, “The Possibility of Evil” and “Summer People”, all with unexpected endings.

We welcome both “explorers” and “drop-ins”. If you have questions, call me.

Gerry Horwitz

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PHYSICAL SCIENCES GROUP

2 p.m. — Wednesday —August 30— via Zoom

The Physical Sciences Group has been meeting every two weeks over the summer, the last meeting having taken place on Aug. 16. Over the last three months we covered Chapter six and most of chapter 7 in our text, Peskin and Schroeder's Introduction to Quantum Field Theory. In chapter six we looked at radiative corrections to scattering amplitudes. This led to the famous calculation of the anomalous magnetic moment of the electron, matching the experimental results to the then relatively new field theoretic quantum electrodynamics, and providing one of the most precision tests of the theory. We also learned how some divergences in the theory can be effectively dealt with. In chapter 7 we explored Quantum Field Theory from an analytic, rather than the perturbative, or Feynman Diagram, approach.

The analytic approach led us to such things as renormalization of the electron mass, and a rigorous foundation for the Scattering Matrix, which includes its own renormalization factor. We also saw the generalization of the Optical Theorem to quantum field theory, both from an analytic perspective and via Feynman Diagrams. At our next meeting on Wed. Aug. 30, at 2pm we will conclude chapter 7 with a detailed discussion of vacuum polarization. This will include its most famous manifestations, the Lamb Shift in the Hydrogen atom spectrum, which had no explanation except via quantum electrodynamics, and the renormalization of the electron charge, as well as more general effects such as in high energy electron positron scattering."

Alvin Halpern
Meeting throughout the summer, members of this group had many a fascinating and lively discussion. Our topics were “free speech” in May, “homophobia” in June, “disinformation”, better known as “fake news”, in July, and most recently, “The Fourth of July” in August. Yes, as odd as it seems, each of us had a great deal to say about that holiday a month after its (annual) occurrence.

The session became a reflection, for each, on patriotism, on his/her childhood and on that individual’s memories of WW2. One member spoke movingly about his childhood memories of wartime in his native European country and of meeting friendly American servicemen there. He spoke of listening to American radio: classical music, what he called “hillbilly” music, and a series about “Johnny Dollar, insurance investigator,” all on the US Armed Forces Network.

Another participant spoke of growing up in Venice, California, as part of a poor family, memories of listening to the radio as a family, and loving Fourth of July concerts, patriotic songs and marches, both then and now. Years after the war, a trip with his spouse to Normandy and to the American cemetery there, proved to be an exceptionally moving experience.

Thoughts of July 4 always brought to mind the late film star Jimmy Cagney singing and dancing “I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy,” said another individual, who remembered her family listening to the radio together, and especially during WW2 newsman Edward R. Murrow’s broadcasts from London. She remembered her mother, who was from the UK, knitting socks for British servicemen.

“He literally kissed the ground” when he arrived in this country, said a fourth person, whose father was an immigrant from Austria and taught his family a very positive, if idealized, view of America. She said she is happy, lucky and proud to be American but regrets that voting has to do with money; candidates rely so much on fundraising.

A different member said her previous patriotism was much affected by the Jan. 6 riot in the Capitol and the recent testimony before Congress of the black police officer who cried while testifying about it. She related that watching those events made her reflect that many patriotic songs, for instance “This Land Is Made For You and Me” do not really include black people.

The active conversations held by the participants in this Study Group will continue at its Zoom meetings on the third Wednesday afternoon of each month at 1:30. September 20 is the next session, when the topic will be “pandemic.”

Gerry Horwitz
The Film Group will meet Wednesday, September 6 at 10 am to view the 1947 musical, Copacabana.

While MGM and other major studios continued producing lavish, innovative musicals, often with talented stars, after the war smaller companies tried to compete with limited resources and less star-studded casts. An obscure and revealing example of their latter-day camp, which in the 1930s might have gained some success, featuring once-well known principals, is United Artists' 1947s Copacabana, the only film ever to pair Groucho Marx and Carmen Miranda. In its contrived plot Miranda plays a Latina singer (named Carmen) who moonlights as a French chanteuse (Mlle Fifi) with the help of her unscrupulous manager/fiancé (Groucho).

With Andy Russell, Earl Wilson, and the DeCastro Sisters all playing themselves and Steve Cochran as a character named Steve, this cut-rate cinematic cabaret is the quintessential late 1940s B-movie musical.

Carmen belts out "Tico Tico Tic," and Groucho, in his first film appearance without Harpo and Chico, croons the Horace-Greely-inspired "Go West, Young Man." The Times critic lamented that Miranda and Marx "scream and grimace through a succession of topsy-turvy scenes, some of them mildly amusing and others relentlessly dull," but Variety more kindly observed that Carmen "handled neatly the semi-dual role, shining in the comedy, as well as the French and Brazilian staccato songs."

Nonetheless, Copacabana retains a certain je-ne-sais-pourquoi kitsch that is difficult to surpass.

Barbara Heckler and Ken Kraus