



The Utah Humanist

Happy Humanist

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HumanistsofUtah.org

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Humanists of Utah is a Chapter of the *American Humanist Association*. We are a nonprofit corporation organized to advocate and promote ethical, rational, and democratic humanism among our membership and the larger community.



Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological or ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
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Humanist Association

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Don't Worry – Everything is Made of Chemicals

Chuck and John Wells gave our monthly meeting presentation a witty sense of academia. Chuck, a chemist from the pharmaceutical and medical industries, and his son, John, who has a background in economics and computers, both elevated the science in our discussion in a light-hearted and jovial way.

They started with a reference to Neil de Grasse Tyson, who said, “Before the Big Bang, there was hydrogen. All the other [chemical] elements were made from hydrogen by dying stars.”

These chemical elements were organized into the Periodic Table of the Elements by Mendelov when he noted that some elements behave chemically in the same general manner. Some elements are inert, and some are highly reactive. For instance, oxygen and sulfur are placed into the same column in the Periodic Table. They are both destructive due to both elements being so reactive.

The destruction that oxygen does we have named “oxidation.” A fast burn, i.e. quick oxidation, has been named “an explosion.” A slow oxidation of iron, goes by the name “rust.”

The Periodic Table is a little more complicated than Mendelov imagined. Elements can be different masses and still be the same element due to different numbers of neutrons. The masses of different forms of the same element are averaged in order to identify a box in the Table for it. You’ve heard of “heavy water,” It’s still oxygen and hydrogen (H₂O) but with more neutrons.

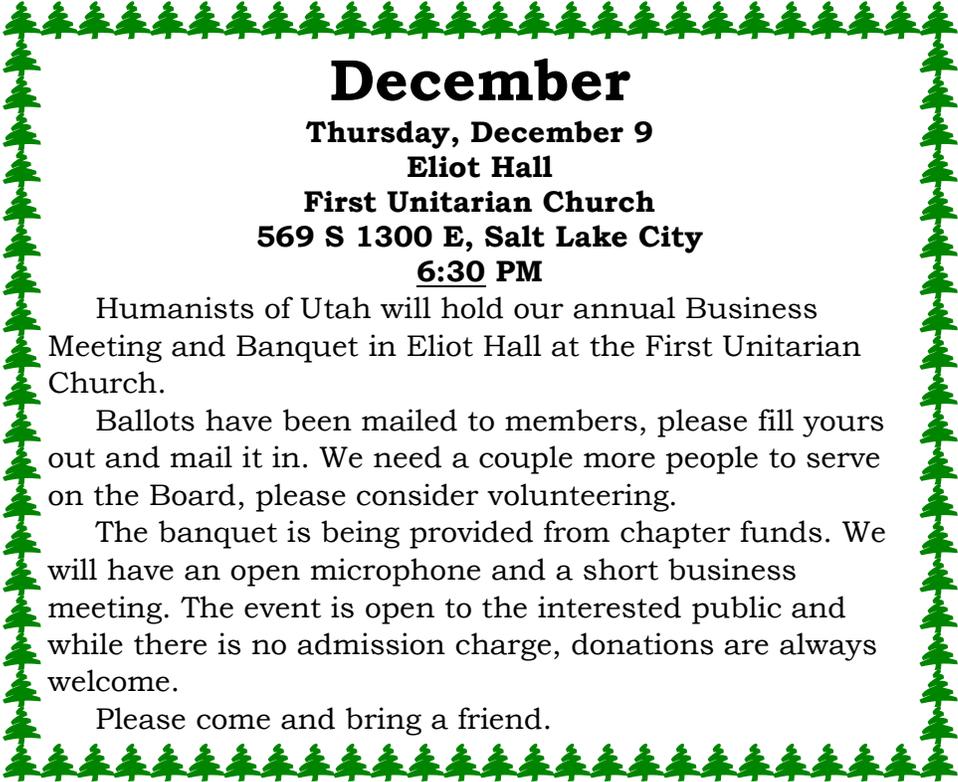
Our speakers recommended YouTube videos about the Periodic Table put together by the University of Birmingham.

The discussion then took a big leap into DNA from the Periodic Table. As all chemistry starts with the periodic table, so then does the chemical compound, DNA, evoke the most interest from human beings since it is our foundational map. We were referred to the [CRISPR](http://www.origene.com) site, www.origene.com, where a complicated discussion of CRISPR/Cas9, an RNA-guided targeted genome editing tool, ensues. The CRISPR/Cas9 allows researchers to do gene knockout, knocking SNPs, insertions and

(Continued on page 3)

Inside This Issue

President’s Message.....	2
Facts.....	3
Put Civics 101 Back in High School	4
Inspiring Donations	4



December

Thursday, December 9
Eliot Hall

First Unitarian Church
569 S 1300 E, Salt Lake City
6:30 PM

Humanists of Utah will hold our annual Business Meeting and Banquet in Eliot Hall at the First Unitarian Church.

Ballots have been mailed to members, please fill yours out and mail it in. We need a couple more people to serve on the Board, please consider volunteering.

The banquet is being provided from chapter funds. We will have an open microphone and a short business meeting. The event is open to the interested public and while there is no admission charge, donations are always welcome.

Please come and bring a friend.

Support the AHA

Humanists of Utah urges you to support the American Humanist Association.

The AHA is dedicated to preserving individual rights and promoting nationally the philosophy of humanism.

Membership brings you the *Humanist* magazine and *Free Mind* newsletter six times a year.

Annual membership is only \$45.00 (**\$35 Introductory Rate**) and can be paid with plastic. Phone (800) 743-6646 or write to:

American Humanist Association
1777 T Street, NW
Washington DC 20009

President's Message

Hi All, hope you are enjoying the holidays. In recent months I have often noted and talked about some recent disaster or shooting that has occurred. But this time I just want to wish you all happy holidays and talk about my cookie mill. That's what Amy and I call the process. I'm mentioning this partly because I have been moving into my mother's home and have a much larger kitchen to use. So, I have spread out the mill and it makes me chuckle how much stuff I have. Imagine twelve cookie sheets, six wire racks, two stand mixers, a hand mixer and on and on.

At our meetings when individuals find out that I bake the cookies they get somewhat amazed when I tell them that I bake two or three thousand cookies this time of year. But it really isn't that amazing when you think about the fact that just doubling a batch will give you over two hundred, so that's a good start. I've been baking cookies for over thirty years now. It started when I got tired of trying to shop for gifts this time of year. Plus, cookies freeze well, and I've been happy to bake enough to have them available

year-round.

After this year though, I plan to cut back on cookies a bit and start trying my hand at baking breads and some pastries I use to make but haven't tried for a while. I enjoy all kinds of cooking and watch a fair amount of the chef shows and try new things as often as possible. The culinary arts are one of the ways to make life much more enjoyable.

Next week is our Winter Social and I hope you will join us and like I always say, Come and enjoy some good food and good conversation.

—Robert Lane
President, HoU





Chemicals

Facts

(Continued from page 1)

deletions in cell lines and animals. I was reminded of how long it has been since I was in school.

DNA determines how an animal carries oxygen to the cells of an organism by providing the blue-prints of the proteins that carry the oxygen in the blood. Humans have hemoglobin, which is red when the iron in the center of the molecule is oxygenated. BTW, this iron does not make blood magnetic. If it did, getting an MRI would kill the patient since the magnet is so powerful it could pull all the iron out of your body and stick it to the sides of the machine.

Hemocyanin is blue and is based on copper instead of iron. Some spiders, crustaceans (notably the horseshoe crab), some mollusks, octopuses and squid have blue blood. This blood is medically useful to use to make a chemical reagent that can be used to assess if a newly developed drug is loaded with toxins or pure. (At this point, how that works was a graduate level discussion. Again, I have been a long time out of school.)

Chlorocruorin, present in many annelids, has a weaker affinity for oxygen than most hemoglobins, by about one fourth. Since it is a dichromatic compound, it appears green when in dilute solutions and red when more concentrated.

As a final point, the Wells team encouraged us to be scientific and to look at evidence. For instance, CaCl_2 is a de-icing agent in ice melt. Is also is a pickle crisper. Your first thought might be to avoid pickles. On the other hand, you've surely eaten them and not died. The idea that "if something is a chemical, it must be bad" is not always true. The Wells duo encouraged us to mistrust rumor and speculation and fend off scare tactics with scientific information.

The scientific consensus around GMO foods is as strong as the scientific consensus around climate change. GMO foods are subjected to more testing than other food and the tests tell us that GMO foods are generally safe. GMO's also allow larger yields, so we can feed more of the earth's 7 billion (and projected to get to 11 billion in the next decade.)

On the other hand, GMO's allow excessive amounts of herbicide to be used leaving large residues of poison on the foods. So, scrub 'em and peel 'em.

Chuck and John Wells want us to wake up, check facts, be aware and make decisions based on science. Isn't that what humanists do?

—Lauren Florence, MD

Fewer than half of Americans inhabit a fact-based reality. Until the 1960's most American's shared common sources for their view of reality, with governmental, institutional, corporate and major media serving as reliable sources for a reasonably factual view of current issues. What has happened since then to create the fictional view of reality held now by a majority of Americans? For me this story is at the heart of our dysfunctional political system and incisively explains the election of a president rooted in fantasy.

The link I am sharing to an article published in *The Atlantic* magazine provides an extensive and brilliant account of the circumstances that led us to this point. Remember the Federal Fairness Doctrine that applied to our airways until 1988? Any outlet broadcasting a political point of view was required by the FCC to give equal time to the opposing view. At the time this served us well because it encouraged legitimacy of view. Anyone advocating fictional viewpoints would be readily corrected by an opponent utilizing recognizable factual data, and exposed as a fool if the viewpoint was at the fringe. Now the fools not only go unpunished but find reward through the mob-like mentality of adherents.

This account cuts both ways; I do believe you will find it thoroughly informative: [How America Lost Its Mind.](#)

—Clark Layton



Put Civics 101 Back in High School

An Immodest Proposal

By Timothy Egan

Excerpted from "We're With Stupid", on The New York Times OpEd page, 11/17/2017

It would be much easier to sleep at night if you could believe that we're in such a mess of misinformation simply because Russian agents disseminated inflammatory posts that reached 126 million people on Facebook.

But the problem is not the Russians — it's us. We're getting played because too many Americans are ill equipped to perform the basic functions of citizenship. If the point of the Russian campaign, aided domestically by right-wing media, was to get people to think there is no such thing as knowable truth, the bad guys have won.

We have a White House of lies because a huge percentage of the population can't tell fact from fiction. But a huge percentage is also clueless about the basic laws of the land. In a democracy, we the people are supposed to understand our role in this power-sharing thing.

Nearly one in three Americans cannot name a single branch of government. When NPR tweeted out sections of the Declaration of Independence last year, many people were outraged. They mistook Thomas Jefferson's words for anti-Trump propaganda.

For that you have to blame all of us: we have allowed the educational system to become negligent in teaching the owner's manual of citizenship.

Suppose we treated citizenship like getting a driver's license. People would have to pass a simple test on American values, history and geography before they were allowed to have a say in the system. We do that for immigrants, and 97 percent of them pass, according to one study.

Yet one in three Americans fail the immigrant citizenship test. This is not an elitist barrier. The test includes questions like, "What major event happened on 9/11?" and "What ocean is on the West Coast of the United States?"

One reason that public schools were

established across the land was to produce an informed citizenry. And up until the 1960s, it was common for students to take three separate courses in civics and government before they got out of high school. Now only a handful of states require proficiency in civics as a condition of high school graduation. Students are hungry, in this turbulent era, for discussion of politics and government. But the educators are failing them. Civics has fallen to the side, in part because of the standardized test mania.

A related concern is historical ignorance. By a 48 percent to 38 percent margin Americans think states' rights, rather than slavery, caused the Civil War. So Trump's chief of staff, John F. Kelly, can say something false about the war, because most people are just as clueless as he is.

There's hope — and there are many ways — to shed light on the cave of American democracy. More than a dozen states now require high school students to pass the immigrant citizenship test. We should also teach kids how to tell fake news from real, as schools in Europe are doing.

—PIQUE

*Newsletter of the Secular Humanist Society
of New York
December 2017*

Inspiring Donations

Humanists of Utah is enrolled in Smith's Inspiring Donations program. If you have a Smith's Fresh Value card, you can register it to benefit Humanists of Utah. Simply visit www.smithsfoodanddrug.com/inspire, create an account, associate it with your Fresh Values card number, and then enter NPO Number: KQ330 within your "account summary." All future purchases will now benefit HoU.

—Leona Blackbird



Humanists of Utah meetings are open to the public and free of any admission charge. A discussion and light refreshments follow the speaker's presentation. Come join us and **bring a friend!**

Monthly meetings are held at 7:30 PM in Eliot Hall of the First Unitarian Church, 569 South 1300 East, on the second Thursday of each month.

Disclaimer: The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of Humanists of Utah nor the American Humanist Association. Reprinting of articles is permitted for humanist groups promoting the interests of humanism if attribution is properly stated.



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>> Put Your Name Here <<
>> Write an Article! <<

Nonprofit

Humanists of Utah is a nonprofit organization supported in large part by dues paying members. Our other major source of funds comes from generous gifts, mostly from the same dues payers who give a little more. In February 2003, chapter member Marion Craig died and left HoU a bequest of \$20,000. We invested this money in an endowment fund. The interest is still helping to pay for banquets, special events, etc. When you create your personal will please consider leaving a gift to Humanists of Utah.

Membership/Renewal Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

- \$50 Regular Annual Membership and subscription to the *Utah Humanist*
 - \$90 Regular 2-year Membership and subscription to the *Utah Humanist*
 - \$35 Regular Annual Membership with email delivery of the *Utah Humanist*
 - \$65 Regular 2-year Membership with email delivery of the *Utah Humanist*
 - \$20 *Student* Annual Membership and subscription to the *Utah Humanist*
 - \$20 Annual subscription to the *Utah Humanist* (I do not want to be listed as a member of **Humanists of Utah**)
 - Please send a *FREE* trial Subscription to the *Utah Humanist*
 - \$ _____ additional contribution to help promote public awareness of humanism
- ⇒ All contributions in excess of the \$20 subscription fee tax deductible.
⇒ *Members* have the right to vote in Chapter elections and participate in Chapter decisions.
⇒ Dues provide for information packets, honoraria to speakers, expenses of newsletter publication, trial subscriptions, copies to libraries, and newsletter exchange with other chapters.

Humanists of Utah
P.O. Box 1043
West Jordan, UT 84084

Notes:

- ◆ *General Meetings* are for all members and the general public. There are no admission charges.
- ◆ *Discussion Group* meetings are open to everyone. A different book or topic is covered every month.
- ◆ *Board Meetings* are planning and business sessions. They are open to all members.
- ◆ Eliot Hall is in the First Unitarian Church located at 569 South 1300 East in Salt Lake City.
- ◆ RE 201 is upstairs in the East Educational Building at the First Unitarian Church.

Upcoming Events

Meeting	Topic	Date	Time	Place
General Meeting	Annual Business Meeting and Banquet	Dec 14	6:30	Eliot Hall
Board Meeting	Chapter Business	Dec 21	7:30	RE 201
General Meeting	The Other Side of the Story: Palestine Barbara Taylor	Jan 11	7:30	Eliot Hall
Board Meeting	Chapter Business	Jan 18	7:30	RE 201



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