



Utah Humanist

Promoting Humanism in Utah since 1991

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Humanists of Utah is a Chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA). 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*

Official publication, AHA

Americanhumanist.org

Doomsday Clock 2024

“The Doomsday Clock was reset at 90 seconds to midnight, still the closest the Clock has ever been to midnight, reflecting the continued state of unprecedented danger the world faces. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, stewards of the Doomsday Clock, emphasized in their announcement that the Clock could be turned back, but governments and people needed to take urgent action.



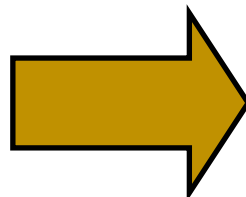
“A variety of global threats cast menacing shadows over the 2024 Clock deliberations, including: the Russia-

(Continued on page 2)

Come back to in-person meetings!

February 10 1-5pm Darwin Day
Thanksgiving Point Museum of Ancient Life

March 17 1pm Salt Lake Library
Lauren Florence MD
Talking About Medicare: Path to Universal
Healthcare



| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Doomsday Clock | 1,2 |
| Great Salt Lake | 3,4 |
| Darwin Day | 5 |
| Batteries | 6 |
| Get involved in HoU | 7 |

(Clock Continued from page 1)

Ukraine war and deterioration of nuclear arms reduction agreements; the Climate Crisis and 2023's official designation as the hottest year on record; the

Make no mistake: resetting the Clock at 90 seconds to midnight is not an indication that the world is stable.

increased sophistication of genetic engineering technologies; and the dramatic advance of generative AI which could magnify disinformation and corrupt the global information environment making it harder to solve the larger existential challenges.

Rachel Bronson, PhD, president and CEO,

the *Bulletin*, said: "Make no mistake: resetting the Clock at 90 seconds to midnight is not an indication that the world is stable. Quite the opposite. It's urgent for governments and communities around the world to act. And the *Bulletin* remains hopeful—and inspired—in seeing the younger generations leading the charge."

The Doomsday Clock's time is set by the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists'* Science and Security Board (SASB) in consultation with its Board of Sponsors, which includes nine Nobel Laureates. Previously in January 2023, the Doomsday Clock was set at 90 seconds to midnight, the closest to midnight the Clock had ever been. "[Read all about it here.](#) And [read the history of the Doomsday Clock here.](#)

Get your bans off my books!
Your legislator needs to hear from you!

The Utah House has approved legislation that would potentially make it quicker to pull books with sexual content from school library shelves. HB29, which passed the House in a 51-16 vote on Tuesday, would also allow for removal of challenged books from schools statewide if officials

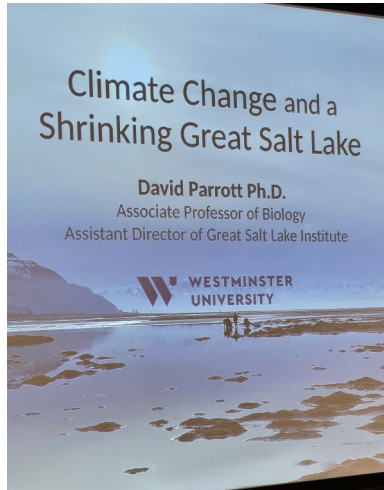


in three school districts decide the material violates state law and should be removed from their schools. The measure now goes to the Senate for consideration. [Read about HB29 here.](#)

Climate Change and a Shrinking Great Salt Lake

Meeting notes by Lauren Florence

David Parrott, PhD, spoke to the Humanists of Utah at their January meeting. He is the Associate Director of the Great Salt Lake Institute and teaches at Westminster University. His research focuses on the land around the Great Salt Lake and the life that it supports, mostly plants and the halophilic bacteria and fungi with which they share the soil. He is specifically interested in those interactions which might help in better understanding how plants tolerate drought or high salinity.



The Great Salt Lake is more than the land around it. Dr. Parrott said that the lake is Water, Salt, Biology, and Dust. These four aspects of the ecosystem of the lake and its environs must be considered in any discussion of how this ecosystem functions and any practical applications there might be from research. Dr. Parrott then talked through the basics of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem. The water that is in the lake is the bottom of a puddle that was left as Lake Bonneville decreased in size. It has been in its present form for about 20,000 years.

When the causeway was built the north and south arms were separated. There is almost no freshwater inflow into the north arm of the lake. When the north arm started to change to a reddish color due to growth of archaea and become more saline, a trestle was added to allow some free movement of the water between the north and

south arms of the lake. Currently the south arm has a 9 —15% salinity. The north arm has 30% salinity. Water can't hold more than 30% salinity so the salt precipitates out.

The brine shrimp and brine flies also can't thrive in water that is hypersalinated. Water is sucked out of their bodies by osmosis. The brine shrimp are food for the shrimp industry worldwide and bring jobs and money into Utah. Brine flies are life-saving food for migrating birds. When the amount of water in the lake decreases, the salinity goes up. Today the lake's elevation is 4191.8 feet above sealevel (up from a historic low of 4188.5 feet last year). At today's level there are adverse effects impacting brine shrimp and brine fly viability, recreation, ecosystem health and mineral production.

Air quality is also affected by the fine silt that is raised. Great Salt Lake is a saline terminal lake and all the garbage that we have put into the lake since we arrived is still there. As the lake elevation decreases, the silt is exposed to the wind and storms, which raise dust into the air. This dust blows mostly towards Salt Lake City and the mountains.

When the dust falls on the snowpack, it increases the rate of flow of the snowmelt and the runoff goes to the lake in a torrent causing floods and landslides.

Usually, direct precipitation adds 3 feet of elevation in winter. Then, over the summer there will be a 3 foot lowering of water level due to loss from

...the lake is Water, Salt, Biology, and Dust. These four aspects of the ecosystem of the lake and its environs must be considered in any discussion of how this ecosystem functions .

(Shrinking GSL Continued from page 3)

evaporation. Thus, the elevation level is usually balanced. When the snowmelt runoff is early and fast, more lake



water is available to evaporate at one time and the lake shrinks.

With human intervention, water loss over 150 years has been 63% from agriculture, 14% from mineral extraction, 14% from municipal uses and 12% from industrial uses,

12% was impounded, 10% went to wetlands, and the reservoirs kept 3%. Water availability is not likely to improve. We can't rely on snow to increase in the long run or for evaporation to change. We have to conserve the water we have or lose the lake. Dr. Parrott worries that we, as a society, will not let the lake get back to where it once was. We want to use the water as we have been.

What is the number one thing we can do? Get educated. Understand what is going on. Look for practical solutions. Get information then talk to people we know and to our legislature. There is hope. We can help the lake recover and balance out the ecosystem. It's not too late.

Religious 'Nones' in America:

Who They Are and What They Believe

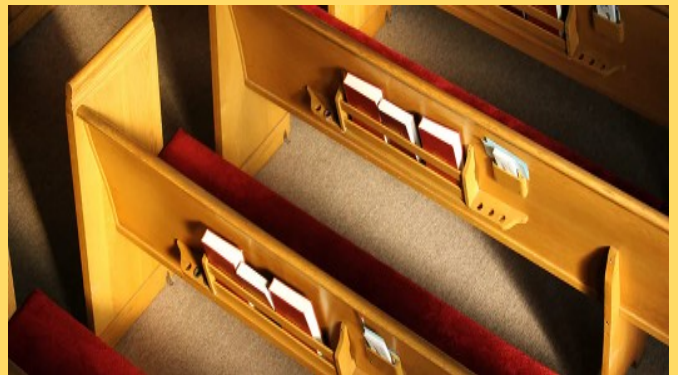
A closer look at how atheists, agnostics and those who describe their religion as 'nothing in particular' see God, religion, morality, science and more here from the [Pew Research Center](#).

Survey data shows:

Most "nones" believe in God or another higher power. But very few go to religious services regularly.

Most say religion does some harm, but many also think it does some good. They are not uniformly anti-religious.

Most "nones" reject the idea that science can explain everything. But they express more positive views of science than religiously affiliated Americans do.



Solid State Batteries

Wayne Wilson

There is developing technology that promises to greatly improve batteries that are used in electric vehicles (EVs.) Some of the biggest current problems are that EV batteries are too heavy, expensive, take too long to charge, and can catch fire in a crash. The idea of switching to a “solid state” battery has been around for a while, always with the note that it is just around the corner. Technology holds the promise of batteries that are smaller and lighter while providing more power.



EV batteries work by using an electrolyte, lithium in this case, which is a liquid where the charge is moved across, which makes energy available. Recharging is necessary when much of the electrolyte is on the

wrong side of the battery and moves the spent lithium back to being charged. The difference between current EV batteries and solid state batteries is that the electrolyte is a solid instead of a liquid. Solids are generally denser than liquids meaning the electrolyte uses less space and battery cells can be smaller, lighter, and faster charging.

EVs are an essential piece of the puzzle to eliminate the need to burn fossil fuels. Work is feverish and seems to be yielding real progress. Companies like Stellantis, Hyundai, and Volkswagen have very large R&D budgets in place. If you have not yet heard of “solid state batteries,” keep your eyes and ears open and will soon. There are other technologies available and several countries like Portugal and Paraguay have actually spent many days using virtually no fossil fuel generated electricity.

EVs are an essential piece of the puzzle to eliminate ... fossil fuels. Work is feverish and seems to be yielding real progress.

Join us 2/10
for Darwin
Day! Free!

Jerry Harris PhD

Earth and
Environmental
Science, Utah Tech

“I prefer living in
environments
where there are

lots of rocks sticking out of the ground, and not covered with masses of vegetation, and especially when full of fossils. St. George is perfect for me!”

Thanksgiving Point, Museum of Ancient Life

Display tables 1 pm

Dr. Harris 2pm

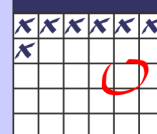
Door prizes 3pm

Birthday cake 4pm



Medicare and Universal Healthcare
Lauren Florence MD

Salt Lake Library
March 17 1 pm

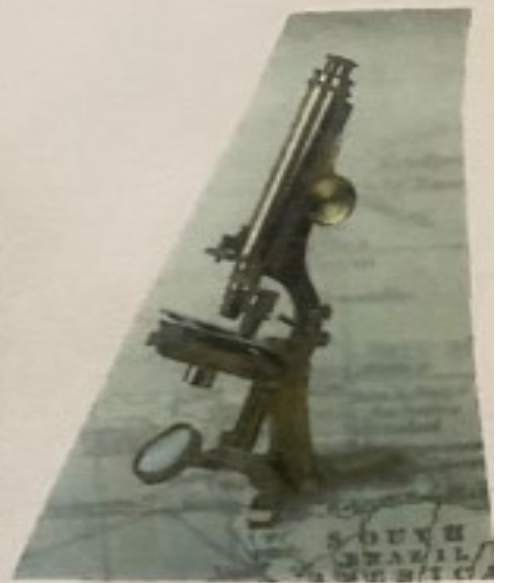


Come and help us celebrate!

Charles Darwin's Birthday

Humanists of Utah present:

Darwin Day 2024



Saturday February 10, 2024

1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

Museum of Ancient Life at Thanksgiving Point

2929 N Thanksgiving Way, Lehi, UT 84043

Speaker: Dr. Jerry Harris, Utah Tech

"The Evolution of Birds"

Free to the public

Door prizes and fun for the kids.



Get Involved!

Plan a Service Project

Plan and organize a HoU service project! Do you know of an organization that needs help? Give members, family and friends an opportunity to contribute. If you are interested in planning or working on a service project, contact Wayne at wwilson@xmission.com.

Join a Discussion Group

Start a discussion group on contemporary topics like criminal justice, unhoused people, body autonomy, local climate change, (no religion or politics!) informed by a selected podcast series, film, fiction or non-fiction book. Be part of a monthly virtual group to share, meet and hear other members. Contact Wayne at wwilson@xmission.com.

Contribute to the Newsletter

Write an article or submit an item to be included in Utah Humanist, contact Deon at deongines@gmail.com.

Suggest a Speaker

Bring a topic to the HoU meeting. Talk to Wayne at wwilson@xmission.com.

2024 State of the Secular States

From American Atheists



“Our new **2024 State of the Secular States**

report sounds the alarm about threats we’re facing this year. See how your state measures up and learn how you can get involved.

The State of the Secular States report identifies four areas of public policy in each state that affect religious equality: Constitutional & Nondiscrimination Protections, Education & Youth, Health Care & Wellness, and Special Privileges for Religion.

We assess more than 50 related law and policy measures in each state as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. The states have been grouped into three broad categories, but they have not been individually ranked.” [Read about it here.](#)

Humanist Family Life Ceremonies

This free AHA course [on family life ceremonies](#) offers purpose, process, and a humanist framework for family rituals and celebrations. Includes:

Introduction to Family Life Ceremonies

Laying Groundwork For Authenticity & Peace

Infusing Daily Practices With Humanist Values

Celebrating “The Spiral of Life” Occasions

Unique Milestone Celebrations

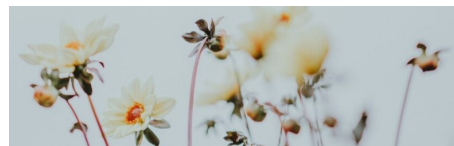
Embedding Humanist Values in Your Calendar

Embedding Nature-Based Values in Your Calendar

A Humanist Guide to Popular Cultural Holidays

Conclusion & Farewell

With Anne Klayeson and Audrey Kindred



HoU Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

- \$10 Regular Annual Membership, Utah Humanist
- FREE* trial Subscription to Utah Humanist
- \$_____ additional contribution to help promote public awareness of humanism (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 and website publication, trial subscriptions, and newsletter exchange with other chapters.

Humanists of Utah

P.O. Box 1043 West Jordan, UT 84084

Pay online with PayPal

no form/ mailing needed!

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

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

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