

## November meeting program

## Agora

This month we will watch *Agora*, a beautiful movie about Hypatia of Alexandria and the rising Christianity that murdered her. Afterwards we will briefly discuss the movie.

Those of you who are older will remember Christian movies such as *Ben Hur*, movies that glorified the Christians as loving victims and demonized the pagans as cruel beasts who found pleasure in watching the lions eat Christians. A few years ago *Kingdom of Heaven* presented the Crusades from a secular viewpoint, as struggles between two cultures to control the wealth and power of the so-called Holy Land. Now *Agora* presents the story of the rise of Christianity in Alexandria, the intellectual center of Egypt, and as such a part of the Roman Empire. Christianity, formerly banned in the Empire, has been blessed by the Emperor Constantine, and is spreading even in Alexandria. The city's famous library houses scrolls containing the works of the greatest minds in history; it also serves as a center for pagan worship. Inside the library, Hypatia teaches philosophy, astronomy and mathematics to her young pupils, some of whom are Christian. Pagan fundamentalists become enraged at the blasphemy of the Christians and attack them, against the advice of Hypatia. The Christians fight back, and surround the pagans inside the library gates. The Emperor grants the Christians possession of the library, and safe passage to the pagans. Christian mobs destroy all the vestiges of pagan religion and knowledge, including the remaining scrolls in the library.

A number of years later, the Christians have gained so much power that even the head of Alexandria's government, a former pagan and pupil of Hypatia, has converted. The Christians press their power, finally turning on Hypatia as a sinner. After all, the Bible says that women should not teach men, as women are inferior to them. Meanwhile Hypatia is portrayed as truly challenging dogma in trying to understand the relationship of the earth to the sun. She says:

"What if we dared to look at the world just as it is? Let us shed for a moment every preconceived idea. What shape would it show us?"

So not only does Hypatia sin for teaching men, but she sins by challenging the methodology of the Bible, revealed dogmas considered Absolute Truth. A Christian mob murders her, providing a metaphor for the destruction of science by a virulent Christianity.



Since this is a full length movie, we will begin showing it soon after 4:30. Please arrive promptly so that you won't miss anything.

[Check out our new updated web site](#)

**Saturday November 27 at 4:30.**

Schroeder's Restaurant 240 Front St San Francisco, CA 94111  
the restaurant is two blocks north of Market Street, between California and Sacramento Streets.  
Use California Street cable car, or BART/MUNI Embarcadero stop. Parking on street or at nearby Embarcadero garage.

[See our new video: The Pope in perspective](#)

The third book from one of our members this year!

**Nailed: Ten Christian Myths That Show Jesus Never Existed at All**

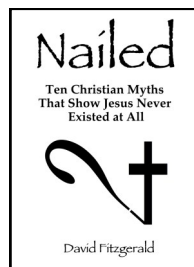
Our very own David Fitzgerald has just released his new book: "Nailed: Ten Christian Myths That Show Jesus Never Existed at All". Here are some early reviews:

"Fitzgerald's is possibly the best 'capsule summary' of the mythicist case I've ever encountered ...with an interesting and accessible approach."

—Earl Doherty, author of *The Jesus Puzzle*

"[Fitzgerald] summarizes a great number of key arguments concisely and with new power and original spin. I really learned something from him. Recalls classical skeptics and biblical critics. A surprising amount of new material."

—Robert M. Price, Ph.D., author of *Deconstructing Jesus and The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man*



"David Fitzgerald reveals himself to be the brightest new star in the firmament of scholars who deny historical reality to "Jesus of Nazareth." His brilliance would have been sufficiently established had he done nothing more than illustrate and explain traditional arguments with a clarity and transparency never achieved by us old-timers. But he has done more. He has developed new arguments and insights as well that will help any honest seeker after truth understand how a fictional character -- perhaps the hero of a mystery play or liturgy -- could come to acquire a biography. Thanks to Fitzgerald, we can see more clearly now how Jesus got a life."

—Frank R. Zindler, editor of *American Atheist*

Press and author of *The Jesus the Jews Never Knew: Sepher Toldoth Yeshu and the quest for the Historical Jesus in Jewish Sources*

## Atheist News

### Larry Hicok, resigns as program director

Since 2007 Larry Hicok has offered selfless service to the San Francisco Atheists, but he has decided to resign his responsibility as speaker program manager. Hicok runs the East Bay Atheists, is speaker program manager for Contra Costa Atheists & Freethinkers, and recently took on the responsibility of California State Director for American Atheists. Given his new workload something had to give, and unfortunately for us, it was the San Francisco Atheists. Hicok will continue on the SFA Steering Committee, but in a reduced capacity. Thank you Larry from all of us here at your San Francisco Atheists, and good luck with your new endeavors.

### The Pope's remarks on atheism and Nazis

Commentators dissect the Pope's speech in which he appeared to associate atheism with the Nazis.

The British Humanist Association Chief Executive Andrew Copson contests the Pope's first remarks about atheism:

"The notion that it was the atheism of Nazis that led to their extremist and hateful views or that somehow fuels intolerance in Britain today is a terrible libel against those who do not believe in god. The notion that it is non-religious people in the UK today who want to force their views on others, coming from a man whose organisation exerts itself internationally to impose its narrow and exclusive form of morality and undermine the human rights of women, children, gay people and many others, is surreal."

[Read more](#)

### Atheist smokes pages of Bible, Koran

A LAWYER who videoed himself smoking cigarettes made with pages from the Bible and the Koran expects to lose his job at a Queensland university.

In a YouTube video titled "[Bible or Koran - which burns best?](#)" Queensland University of Technology staff member Alex Stewart compares cigarettes made with pages from the two texts. The atheist says in the clip that burning religious books is no big deal and people need to get over it.

[Read more](#)

### American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us

Is bland beautiful? Almost never, most of us would say. But when it comes to religion in a diverse society, the answer may be a surprising "yes."

This is the chief implication of the most successfully argued sociological study of American religion in more than half a century. Robert Putnam and David Campbell harvest a generation of research and mature reflection in a compelling new book, "American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us." Jammed with interesting information about how religious affiliations of all kinds divide and unite Americans of various generations, regions, sexes, educational levels and ethno-racial groups, this volume is at once an invaluable reference work and a systematically argued treatise.

[Read more](#)

### Topic of Cancer

One fine June day, the author is launching his best-selling memoir, Hitch-22. The next, he's throwing up backstage at The Daily Show, in a brief bout of denial, before entering the unfamiliar country—with its egalitarian spirit, martial metaphors, and hard bargains of people who have cancer.

[Read more](#)

[Atheists Don't Have No Songs-Steve Martin With The Steep Canyon Rangers](#)

Quote of the month

Thomas Jefferson

"Question with boldness even the existence of God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear."

Find out what is coming up

Click a graphic below to open that calendar



Monthly Meeting  
Saturday, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010 4:30pm

Joke of the month





East Bay Atheists November Meeting

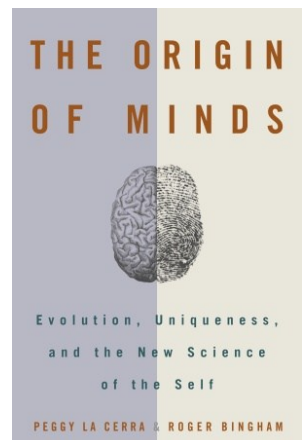


This month we feature a talk by Neuroscientist Dr. Peggy LaCerra, Director of the Center for Evolutionary Neuroscience, and the coauthor of Origin of the Minds. She will speak on "The Neural Basis of Religious and Spiritual Self Transformation." This is how she describes her talk:

"All of the world's major religions and spiritual traditions suggest – or mandate – that participants engage in highly specific daily practices and seasonal rituals. These from one tradition to the next, but they temporarily modify the practitioner's performed on a regular basis, these sense of self and reality for a protracted or disprove the idea that engaging in one might be tuning one's mind into a of neuroscientific evidence, we do know neural networks in our brain that the physical and social environment. networks of experience that give rise to that form the scaffolding of our mind, this talk, I will describe the neural and self in an online fashion under how transformational practices from religious, spiritual and secular traditions networks in a specific manner that ultimately results in the generation of a predictable 'spiritual' experience of life."



practices differ on various dimensions have one thing in common: they serve to internal psychological experience. When practices can dramatically alter one's period of time. There is no way to prove or another of these practices actually "divine presence"; however, on the basis that these practices are modifying the instantiate our history of experience in Moreover, we know that it is these the higher-order neural representations our reality and our sense of our self. In mechanisms that are creating our reality normal circumstances, and then show various craft these



Please join us for this talk and the discussion afterwards.

And don't forget to join the speaker for dinner after the meeting at a local reasonably priced Chinese Restaurant.

Sunday, November 21, 1:30 - 3:30 PM

Berkeley Main Library, 3rd Floor Meeting Room  
2090 Kittredge St., One Block From Downtown Berkeley BART  
Larry Hicok, Coordinator: 510-222-7580  
Ski Grabowski, Treasurer: 510-652-8350

BART Access: From the downtown Berkeley BART Station, walk 1.5 blocks south on Shattuck Avenue, then turn right on Kittredge. The library is a half block down the street on the left. Parking: The city parking lot at Allston & Harold Way, a short block from the library, is \$5 for the entire day on Sunday. If you don't mind walking, take University to MLK, turn right and then instead of proceeding left on Allston to the parking lot, turn right. In several blocks you will see parking on the side streets.

