

Rescheduled
from
February.



Positively Skeptical: A Way of Knowing

Prof. Marvin Zelkowitz

Skepticism, a concept from the ancient Greeks over 2000 years ago, had its modern rebirth in the mid-20th century. But what is it? Are skeptics, as often portrayed, only a bunch of cynics and curmudgeons eager to rain on everyone's parade? Or is there a more important aspect to being a skeptic? Why is it in your own self-interest to be a skeptic?

Do you believe in global warming? Alternative medicine? Alien abduction? Natural remedies? UFOs? Reincarnation? Spirits? Evolution? Conspiracy theories? Dowsing? To a skeptic, the topic doesn't matter. What is important is the word "believe" at the beginning of the list. Why should you believe any of these concepts? What is the evidence and is it credible? This is the foundation upon which modern skepticism relies.

With the current controversy between Intelligent Design and Evolution and the celebration of Charles Darwin's birthday (Darwin Day – February 12), now is an appropriate time to recognize the role that skepticism should play in our daily lives. In this lecture, the roots of skepticism from the early Greeks, through the Renaissance, up to the present day, will be explored. We will mention current skeptical organizations and show how NCAS fits into this mostly grass-roots structure.

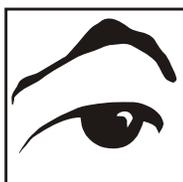
Marvin Zelkowitz is a professor of Computer Science at the University of Maryland in College Park. He has been a member of NCAS for 14 years, was a past president of the organization, and is now on the Board of Directors. His research interests are in the evaluation of new technologies used by the computer industry to produce software. He has been applying skepticism professionally within the academic research community for the past 35 years, validating claims made about those new technologies.

2 - 4 pm, Saturday
March 18, 2006

LOCATION (not our usual venue):
Silver Spring Library
8901 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910

4½ blocks from Silver Spring Metro
(Red Line)

Please check the NCAS hotline for last minute updates and weather-related changes: 301-587-3827



National Capital Area Skeptics Public Lecture Series

FREE admission - Everyone welcome - members and non-members
For more information call the 24-hour NCAS Skeptic Line recording at
(301) 587-3827
e-mail: ncas@ncas.org
www.ncas.org



Shadow of a Doubt

MARCH 2006

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

Board Notes

- Members are welcome to attend NCAS Board meetings immediately after each month's NCAS Forum.
- The NCAS Board did not meet in February, due to cancellation of the February 11 Forum, because of snow.
- Please always check the NCAS hotline: 301-587-3827 for any last-minute program changes.
- Members are encouraged to be NCAS judges at your local county school science fair. No experience or special credentials needed. Please contact NCAS Board Member Walter F. Rowe, wfrowe@gwu.edu, 703-494-2916.
- We need members to augment our growing publicity efforts by posting NCAS announcements in local libraries, local bulletin boards, *etc.*
- Please contact the NCAS Board any time by email to ncas@ncas.org or at 301-587-3827. ☞

The Dark Universe—Black Holes, Dark Matter, Dark Energy (All-Day Seminar)

*Smithsonian Resident Associate Program
Sat., March 18, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.*

Recent discoveries in astrophysics and cosmology suggest that the most exciting constituents of the cosmos are dark. There are super-massive black holes lurking at the centers of galaxies. Most of the matter in the universe is in the form of invisible dark matter. No less than 70 percent of the energy of the universe is a mysterious dark energy. These findings mark an intriguing new understanding of our place in the grand scheme of things.

In a journey through cutting-edge discoveries,

world renowned astrophysicist and cosmologist **Mario Livio** takes participants from the physics of black holes through the attempts to identify the constituents of dark matter and the nature of dark energy. Along the way, he presents stunning images and observations from the Hubble Space Telescope, aimed at solving these mysteries.

10 a.m. to 11 a.m. What Are Black Holes?

How monster black holes are discovered and what their properties are. Is information lost in black holes?

11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Dark Matter

Does dark matter truly exist? Its effects on galaxies and cluster of galaxies; theories in particle physics and supersymmetry; and dark matter candidates, along with the possibility of directly detecting them.

12:30 to 2 p.m. Lunch

Participants provide their own lunch.

2 to 3:15 p.m. Dark Energy

Einstein's biggest blunder; the discovery of the accelerating universe and dark energy; and new developments in the understanding of the nature of dark energy.

3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Or, Maybe We Don't Understand Gravity?

Alternative theories of gravity that do not require dark matter or dark energy.

Livio is a senior astronomer at the Space Telescope Science Institute, which conducts the scientific program of the Hubble Space Telescope.

Tickets: Gen. Admission \$131, RAP Members \$85, Senior Members \$77. **Phone:** 202-252-0012

Location: Marion & Gustave Ring Auditorium, Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Independence Ave. & 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC ☞



National Capital Area Skeptics
P.O. Box 8428
Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

NCAS Information:

Telephone: 301-587-3827

Email: ncas@ncas.org

Skeptical Eye submission:

S_Eye@ncas.org

Website: <http://www.ncas.org/>