



skepticamp

NYC 2024

December 7, 2024

Cre8tive NYC, 134 W 29th St, New York, NY 10001

www.SkepticCampNYC.org

Skepticamp is an Open Conference on science and skepticism, where any of the attendees can also be presenters! It has its historic roots in the “BarCamp” event model that was once popular among technology communities. Today, however, the “camp” suffix doesn’t really mean anything, anymore. It’s just part of the legacy branding now.

We have some rules and things to keep in mind, during the event:

- Skepticamp lectures are not to be passively accepted. We encourage the asking of challenging questions! But, always please try to **argue the argument**, without insulting or disrespecting the people, themselves.
- Every speaker is required to endure at least 5 minutes of live Q&A. Some presenters won’t even mind if you interject with a question in the middle of their presentation. *But, be respectful of those who choose to wait until the end for answers.*
- Behavior that is abusive to anyone, or disruptive of the event will get you ejected.
- Everything in front of a camera is going to be **recorded**, unless otherwise specified.
- No unauthorized videotaping or audio recording of your own, please.
- Everyone joining the web conference will be muted while speakers are speaking.
- Always feel free to come and go into and out of the event, as you please. No one is forced to be here. Please do not be disruptive if you do decide to leave in the middle of a session.
- If you make a mess, you will be responsible for cleaning it up.
- ***The opinions of Skepticamp presenters do not necessarily reflect those of its organizers.***
- Have fun! And we hope you learn something awesome!

If you would like to speak at Skepticamp NYC, either next year, or to fill a gap this year, please read the Session Leader’s Guide on our web site: <http://skepticampnyc.org/SessionGuide.aspx>

Sponsorship

New York City Skeptics: <http://www.nycskeptics.org>

New York City Skeptics is an all-volunteer, 501(c)3 nonprofit that promotes critical thinking and science education. Consider donating so that we can run fabulous, thought-provoking events!

Mitchell Scott Lampert

Mitchell is just some guy, you know. But, he puts a lot of time and resources into this. So, we think he ought to be listed here, as well.

Organizers

Lead Organizer: Mitchell Scott Lampert: MitchLampert42@gmail.com

Assistant Organizers and Volunteers: Russ Dobler, Benny Pollak, Julian Ignaczak, Craig Sachs, Jonathan Nelson

Other Consultants (from previous years): Michael Feldman and Reed Esau

Zoom Link: <https://us05web.zoom.us/j/81395381002?pwd=wZCGl2MrXuInb5uXH6Sp1aHUPSpncv.1>

If you find anything going wrong with the Zoom meeting, please contact: admin@skepticampnyc.org



share the apple of knowledge

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The Planned Schedule

This schedule, of course, is subject to change throughout the day.

9:00 AM 10:15 AM Pre-Con Meet and Greet
Schmooze with your fellow attendees, while we get things ready.

10:15 AM 10:30 AM **Opening Ceremonies and Other Obligatory Stuff**

Category: Household Dangers

10:30 AM 11:00 AM Marcus **Spooky Cheap Real Estate**
I will discuss the phenomenon of Stigmatized Properties (formerly known as Psychologically damaged). From this I will pivot to the Amityville Horror hoax.

11:00 AM 11:30 AM Russ Dobler **Fluoride: It's even in our water, now!**
Fluoride sure is a magical ion, an all-natural industrial waste that stunts brain development yet was called one of the top 10 public health achievements of the 20th century. As someone who's married to a dental assistant and works in the town where the largest water fluoridation study in the country took place, I'll try to separate the plaque from the enamel on fluoride claims, so you have a little ammunition for when your Uncle Ron spouts off on Facebook.

11:30 AM 12:00 PM A Few Words Before Lunch
We have a few announcements to make, both happy and sad.

12:00 PM 2:00 PM **Lunch Break**

Category: Hot Button Topics

2:00 PM 2:30 PM Bill Chapman **Report From the Climate Debate**
Bill Chapman has been very active in the climate debate since 2016, the first time he gave a SkeptiCamp presentation on the subject. He has travelled to DC over half a dozen times to attend conferences and lobby congress on climate. Bill has been specializing in outreach to conservatives, which is, to say the least, an uphill battle. The debate has evolved over the years, and Bill would like to comment on the current state of affairs.

2:30 PM 3:00 PM Nathan H. Lents **The Sexual Evolution: The Deep Roots of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality**
We are currently living through a social upheaval in the area of sex and gender, making the sexual revolution of the 1960s look pale in comparison. Young people are engaging a free-wheeling, no rules, no labels approach that is unsettling and bewildering to those committed to a more traditional view of sex and relationships. In this talk, I will demonstrate how the current moment is actually a rediscovery of a more diverse and expansive approach to sex and gender that our ancestors once had. Biological sex is more than just males and females; animals engage a creative approach to gender; and sex is about far more than procreation. As we learn ever more about the surprisingly creative sex lives of other animals, it becomes clear that human sexual diversity is in keeping millions of years of animal evolution.

3:00 PM 3:15 PM Short Break #1

Category: The Realm of the Woo

3:15 PM 3:45 PM Margaret Downey **It's Bad Luck to be Superstitious**
Friday the 13th is happening in December! So, here is talk from the world's only Friggatriskaiddkaphobia Treatment Nurse.

3:45 PM 4:15 PM Sammy Shuster **The Holistic Quantum Activation™ Art Expo: A Retrospective**
This past September, the Starstuff Society hosted its inaugural event, the Holistic Quantum Activation Art Expo. This parody of a holistic health and wellness expo featured satirical vendors and workshop leaders, highlighting local artists while showcasing exaggerated wellness products and services. The event drew comparisons to the absurdity of actual non-evidence-based practices, while also exposing the predatory tactics often used by such sellers. Additionally, a 'banned books' installation was included, offering zines and books promoting scientific skepticism and critical thinking. Our talk will be discussing the development and impact of the show, and plans and brainstorming for the future.

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Schedule continued:

4:15 PM 4:30 PM Short Break #2

Category: Extraterrestrials or Otherwise

4:30 PM 5:00 PM Rob Palmer

The UFO Presentation THEY Don't Want You to Attend

Most of the public believes that aliens are visiting Earth in their UFOs, and many believe their government is suppressing this (for reasons). Although most scientists & skeptics dispute this, due to the prodigious number of exoplanets now known to exist, most of them routinely state with confidence that extraterrestrial civilizations are very likely and perhaps even abundant in the Milky Way, and "first contact" is only a matter of time. This presentation will explore whether this ubiquitous optimism is warranted.

5:00 PM 5:30 PM Mitchell Lampert

Ancient Secrets of the Great Pyramids Revealed! (Spoiler Alert: It Was NOT Aliens.)

We might not know everything about how the ancient pyramids of Egypt were built, historically speaking. But, archeologists actually know quite a bit more than most people realize, about its possible methods of construction! Enough knowledge that we mere humans probably could rebuild them today, if we had to, using ONLY the tools available 4,000 years ago!

Of course, we would have to settle on one of several competing ideas for its assembly process, first. (I would root for the Internal Ramp Theory, but I suspect I might be outvoted on that one.) Then we would have to convince 20,000+ people, at a time, to commit to the excessively dangerous labor of doing so, over the course of several decades. But, other than that: it should be a piece of cake!

This talk will offer a brief overview of some of that knowledge; and why it is pointless to assert aliens into the picture, anymore.

5:30 PM 5:45 PM Bonus Content?

Depending on how much time we have left over, there might be room to squeeze in one more thing.

5:45 PM 6:00 PM Closing Ceremonies and Cleaning Up After Ourselves

6:00 PM Until Whenever: After Party - Russ Dobler is picking a nearby place.

Note: The categories don't really mean anything, and aren't really very important.

Biographies

These were mostly self-written, so take them with a few grains of salt.

Olga Ast

I'm an interdisciplinary artist, curator and independent scholar. One of my main goals is to investigate connections between time, space and information. I have exhibited and lectured in the U.S. and abroad, presenting my work at art-science projects, including art shows and multidisciplinary conferences at Rutgers, New York, Gottingen, Moscow, Toronto and other universities; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; the National Academy of Sciences; the Museum of Natural Sciences of Turin; the Bridges Math Art exhibit and the International Conferences on Time Perspectives. My books include *Fleeing from Absence: four cross-disciplinary essays on time, its nature and its interpretations*; and *Infinite Instances: Studies & Images of Time*, a collection of papers and artworks by contributors to the ArcheTime project, which I have been curating since 2009.

Bill Chapman

Bill got a BS in Engineering with emphasis on Computer Science from Caltech in 1983, after which he spent about 20 years writing CAD software for chip design. Outside his major, his education, between high school and college, includes 4 years of physics, 3 of chemistry, and several years of calculus. Most of Bill's education in economics came from working for Wall Street as a computer programmer since 2005, where his firm would hire former traders to teach the programmers finance and economics. Bill ran an economics discussion group from 2013-2016 before running out of things to talk about, and switched his focus to climate change in 2016. In addition to outreach to conservatives, Bill also focuses on trying to promote greater technical sophistication among climate activists.

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Biographies continued:

Russ Dobler

President of the New York City Skeptics and Science Editor for entertainment website AIPT, where I solicit and publish content on the science of superheroes and other pop culture, with an emphasis on skepticism and critical thinking.

Margaret Downey

Margaret Downey is a nontheist activist who is a former President of Atheist Alliance International and founder and president of the Freethought Society. She also founded the Anti-Discrimination Support Network, which reports and helps deal with discrimination against atheists. (From Wikipedia)

Mitchell Lampert

I am the founder of the New York City edition of SkeptiCamp, and have been a regular member of the New York City Skeptics for many years. By day I am a software developer for a major financial institution. By night I practice convincing people that they are wrong about stuff.

Nathan H. Lents

Nathan H. Lents is Professor of Biology at John Jay College, The City University of New York. His research lab studies human genome evolution and forensic DNA analysis, and he is the author of *Not So Different*, *Human Errors*, and *The Sexual Evolution*.

Rob Palmer

Rob Palmer is a retired aerospace engineer turned skeptical and atheist activist. Beginning in 2018, almost 100 of his articles have been published by Skeptical Inquirer, AIPT Science, and other skeptical and humanist media. Rob writes about contemporary skeptical issues and has interviewed many individuals for his Skeptical Inquirer column, The Well-Known Skeptic, including Neil deGrasse Tyson, Bill Nye, Richard Dawkins, Penn & Teller, John de Lancie, and even Russ Dobler. He also contributes occasional interviews to The Skeptic Zone podcast. Rob has given presentations on a variety of skeptical topics for various groups and conventions, including Dragon Con 2021, various SkeptiCamps, and four times at CSICon Las Vegas. He has been interviewed about his work on various podcasts and YouTube shows, including The Skeptic Zone, Big Picture Science, Point of Inquiry, The Thinking Atheist, and by RecoveringfromReligion.org, for which he serves as a helpline agent and the co-host of their weekly livestreamed show.

Marcus

Marcus is a middle-aged, native New Yorker and a Godzilla enthusiast. He has worked in finance in the fashion industry for more than 20 years and now works for a cable network. Raised by lazy Catholics, Marcus has converted to Pastafarianism. He currently lives in Brooklyn and has a pet spider named Lois who sometimes greets him in the shower.

