

Norah Boyce Science lectures - archives

Autumn term 2008

Thursday 16 October

[Global Darwin](#)

by Professor James Secord, Professor of History and Philosophy of Science, Director of the Correspondence of Charles Darwin, Dept of the History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge

This talk looks at Darwin and the reception of his work in an international context. The second half of the 19th century, and especially its final decades, were the first great age of global communication – through steamships, the postal system and the electric telegraph. As a result, Darwin's works were debated not only in Europe, but throughout the world, from London to Beirut, from Shanghai to San Francisco. The Descent of Man, the Origin of Species, and other evolutionary books became a focal point for debates about modern society and the shape it should take in the future.

Thursday 30 October

[GM crops and reflections on future food, feed, fuel, fibre and famine](#)

by Professor Philip J Dale, Emeritus Fellow of the John Innes Centre in Norwich

Food and fuel prices are increasing at an alarming rate and there have been food riots in several parts of the world. In the GM National Debate in 2003 the people who took part were seen to reject the use of GM crops in the UK and demonstrations against field testing of GM plants continue in the UK. Professor Dale will give an overview of the current status of GM crops along with some thoughts on the challenges ahead.

Thursday 13 November

[Herbs or Pills? A Pharmacologist's Perspective](#)

by Dr Jenny Koenig, Dean, Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge

Western and Chinese medicine have a long tradition of using herbs as medicines and many of the medicines we take today either come directly from plants or are extracted from them. In this lecture we will look at what is in herbal medicines, what we know about how some of them work and why you might (or might not) want to take a pill instead.

Spring term 2009

Thursday 22 January

[Towards the star trek tricorder - the science fact and fiction behind the genomic discovery of biomarkers](#)

by Dr Jules Griffin

Recent advances in technology have allowed us to measure a wide range of biological intermediates (mRNA, proteins and metabolites) both rapidly and cheaply, suggesting that we could use these approaches to screen for diseases and monitor drug efficacy. However, to date there have been few examples of a validated biomarker of a disease from these tools. I will be looking at the technologies behind these new approaches to clinical diagnostics and give some examples of the pitfalls and promise they hold in producing an automatic medical diagnostic tool.

Thursday 5 February

[A new picture of the past](#)

by Carenza Lewis, Archaeologist

The talk will be an account of the results of three years' archaeological excavation by hundreds of volunteers in 18 villages in eastern England, presenting new evidence from

across the region and considering how it is helping us map the past and develop our ideas about how and why villages changed in the past.

Thursday 19 February

Animal communication and the evolution of human language

by Bert Vaux, University Lecturer in Linguistics

An introduction to the historical and scientific study of human and animal language. The talk will survey the design features that have been suggested to be unique to human language (eg vocalisation, abstract reference) and investigate whether any or all of these exist elsewhere in the animal world. Animals to be discussed include primates, bees, seals and African grey parrots.

Summer term 2009

Tuesday 19 May

Earthquakes, volcanoes and continental drift

by Dr Alan Smith, Emeritus Reader in the Earth Sciences Department of Cambridge University and a member of the U3AC.

Tuesday 2 June

A fresh look at the Scenery of Britain

by Dr Peter Friend, Earth Sciences Department of Cambridge University and author of a newly published book in the Collins New Naturalist Series on the landscape and geology of Southern England

Autumn term 2009

Tuesday 13 October

Climate Change and Sustainable Energy

Dr Hugh Hunt

Tuesday 20 October

Brain Gender

Professor Melissa Hines

Tuesday 24 November

Disease, Experiment and Physiology

Professor James Fitzsimons, MD, FRS

Spring term 2010

Tuesday 19 January

Polar insects – survival of cold and climate change

Professor Bill Block

Tuesday 9 February

Stem Cells: Hope or Hype?

Dr Kate Quinlan and Professor Roger Pedersen

Tuesday 23 February

Discovering what genes do by knocking them out: control of puberty and fertility

Professor Bill Colledge

Tuesday 9 March
Post-war Ornithology in Cambridge
Peter Bircham

Summer term 2010

Tuesday 11 May
The Science and Beauty of Nebulae
Dr Carolin Crawford

Tuesday 25 May
Moving in an uncertain world: How the brain controls the body
Professor Daniel Wolpert, MD, Ph