

Undergraduate Research Newsletter

Feel left out of the loop?
Missing updates? Like us
on Facebook to stay in the
know!

Wednesday Luncheon with Dr. Shana Goffredi The Universe Below: Explorations of Life in the Deep-Sea

The deep-sea has been described as one of the last unexplored frontiers on Earth, representing 90% of the global ocean volume. Previously portrayed as a dark, life-less desert, recent findings, aided by advanced submersible technologies, have begun to illuminate a much richer environment, home to thousands of new animal species and an even greater number of microorganisms. This presentation will explore the nature of this hidden biosphere and the unusual cooperative partnerships formed between invertebrates and bacteria that have been recently discovered in the abyss.



Luncheon in Lower
Herrick!

Dietary Restrictions?
Email urc@oxy.edu

Jai Levin on meditation and willingness to pay



In mid-March, Jonah Lehrer, author of "How We Decide" and contributor to several publications, traveled to Occidental to give a talk sponsored by the Cognitive Science department. Lehrer's influence, however, extended beyond his lecture: it helped create junior Jai Levin's summer research project. "In [How We Decide] there was an experiment about priming that was really interesting," Levin said. Priming, as Levin describes it, anchors an individual to a range of numbers and is widely used in marketing. "When you walk into Costco for instance, the first thing you see are all the really big numbers. Then when you're walking through the store, everything feels cheaper."

The "How We Decide" section on priming appeared to Levin related to an article on meditation and valuation exercises he was familiar with. Levin then developed a

research proposal with Professor Levitan that requires participants to meditate before evaluating the price they'd be willing to pay for items or experiences. He hopes that the meditation practices led by a local instructor will activate similar neurological areas to those in previous studies. "Half the participants will meditate directly before taking the evaluation survey and the other half will go directly into the survey. But I am teaching all of them a basic understanding of meditation," Levin explained. As with most students in the summer research program, Levin has had to change his experiment as challenges arise. "I've been limited significantly in how many people I have so I've had to readjust the amount of items I'm asking everyone and the structure of when they're taking the survey relative to the meditation practice," Levin said.

Researching at the nexus of Cognitive Science and Behavioral Economics, Levin's project has global relevance and interdisciplinary ramifications. "I think it will be interesting to see if a meditative lifestyle would be less prone to value worldly goods or a materialistic lifestyle," Levin said. The summer research project is not the end of Levin's interest in meditation and valuation. "I've been thinking about trying a different experiment, maybe a Richter in India where I could use experienced meditators to do a similar practice."

Events

A Midsummer Night's Dream at La Canada Flintridge Shakespeare Festival

Byrnes Amphitheater

Friday, Saturday, Sunday
(8pm)

Fireworks Shows

Pasadena, *Rose
Bowl*, \$13

Burbank, *Starlight
Bowl*, \$12

La Crescenta,
*Crescenta Valley
High School*, \$5

Hollywood,
Hollywood Bowl, \$36

The Rattling Wall Reading at Book Soup

West Hollywood

Wednesday (7:00 pm)

Readings by James Frey,
Tony Hoagland, and two
surprise readers!