

Dr. Massimo Pigliucci on “The Quest for Character: How to Make Sure That Our Politicians are Not Crooked”

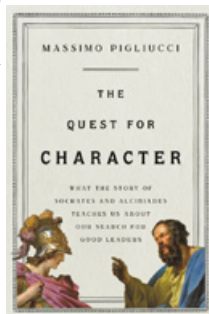
AFS will welcome another popular repeat speaker, a nationally highly regarded and quite important one, for our Zoom meeting for October, Dr. (thrice over: three doctorates in two broad subjects—biology and philosophy—and in two different languages—Italian and English) Massimo



Massimo Pigliucci

Pigliucci. He will address *The Quest for Character: How to make sure that our politicians are not crooked*, a topic directly related to his latest book (details below).

Massimo Pigliucci is a prolific writer, with dozens of significant publications to his credit, including *Tales of the Rational: Skeptical Essays About Nature and Science* (Freethought Press, 2000)—one of AFS’s own book publications. He is also a blogger, podcaster, as well as the K.D. Irani Professor of Philosophy at the City College of New York. His academic work is in evolutionary biology, philosophy of science, the nature of pseudoscience, and practical philosophy. His other books include *How to Be a Stoic: Using Ancient Philosophy to Live a Modern Life* (Basic Books) and *Nonsense on Stilts: How to Tell Science from Bunk* (University of Chicago Press). His latest book, *The Quest for Character: What the Story of Socrates and Alcibiades Teaches Us about Our Search for Good Leaders* (Basic Books), has just been published in late September. More by Massimo at philosophyasawayoflife.blog/.



For this talk/discussion, Pigliucci asks, “Is good character something that can be taught? In 430 BCE, Socrates set out to teach the vain, power-seeking Athenian statesman Alcibiades how to be a good person – and failed spectacularly.

Calendar

Nov 13	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm
Dec 11	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm
Jan 8	General Meeting on Zoom	1 pm

All events are via Zoom unless noted and are subject to change.

Alcibiades went on to beguile his city into an idiotic war with Sparta, and all of Athens paid the price. In *The Quest for Character*, philosophy professor Massimo Pigliucci retells this famous story and asks what we can learn from it. He blends ancient sources with modern interpretations to give a full picture of the philosophy and cultivation of character, virtue, and personal excellence. Ultimately, the question is not just how we can make sure that our politicians are not crooks, but how we can make sure that we can each lead excellent lives.”

Expect to learn much more about character, in leaders and in ourselves—so there will be lessons for the elections next month but also for long after. There will be time for some questions.

We’re always proud to provide great programs for our members and visitors, and this will be another fine example of that. It’ll be great to have Dr. Pigliucci back after a short absence. Details below.

AFS October Meeting Oct 9, 2022 1:00-2:30 PM (EST)

To join Zoom meeting go to this link:
us02web.zoom.us/j/89006560911

It’s time to find candidates to run for AFS board for 2023. The Board is seated in January and roles will be picked for each board member then. Please nominate someone or run yourself.

For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!
meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society

Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta, GA, 30339 unless presented online due to global pandemic (see link on page 1). Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:30 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.



The views and opinions expressed by speakers at AFS do not necessarily reflect those of AFS members or its policy.

- 9 Oct Massimo Pigliucci, "The Quest for Character: How to Make Sure That Our Politicians are Not Crooked"
- 13 Nov Valerie Tarico
- 11 Dec Annie Laurie Gaylor
- 8 Jan Chuck Miller, "Religion and White Supremacy"

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The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists.

We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about living a good life free from religion through attending AFS speeches, debates, and discussions. We employ protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available to achieve our mission.

We define freethought as "the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief."

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion. We do this through a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs, and by maintaining a web forum and an extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other's company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences. Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

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FFRF applauds poll showing public support for Supreme Court expansion

ffrf.org

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is pleased that a major new poll shows more than half of Americans support the expansion of the number of justices on the U.S. Supreme Court.

The results of the **latest Marquette University Law School poll** indicate that 51 percent favor court expansion, which **notably contrasts with the 56 percent** who opposed court reform last year. This is a clear indication that respondents are taking note of the more polarized — and more extremist — Supreme Court.

“This exciting shift showing majority support for court reform indicates a recognition by the American public that our civil rights are in danger, given recent decisions by the extremist supermajority,” says **Annie Laurie Gaylor**, FFRF co-president. Gaylor added that **President Biden** and most elected officials who are shying away from court reform should take heed.

The waning public confidence and a recognition of a negative ideological shift in the nation’s highest court is reflected by the solid 60 percent who “disapprove” of the way the Supreme Court is handling its job. Sixty-four percent of respondents in the September poll indicate they view the court as

having a “conservative” or “somewhat conservative” ideology, **up from 51 percent from a poll conducted in May.**

FFRF has long maintained that the dramatic shift in the court’s ideology is out of touch with the views of the majority of Americans and that, with a third of Supreme Court justices nominated by **President Trump**, the

high court has been captured by Christian nationalists. Evangelical extremists, such as Family Research Council President **Tony Perkins**, **have not been shy about offering praise to Trump** for packing the high court with religious radicals.

Court expansion is not only long overdue as a corrective, it also follows historic precedent. The Judiciary Act of 1789 originally set the number of seats on the Supreme Court to six. However, the court has been expanded a number of times since then. The current court sits at nine justices mirroring the number of federal courts of appeals at the time of the last expansion. The number of federal courts of appeals has since increased to 13, so logic dictates that the number of seats on the U.S. Supreme Court should follow. FFRF supports the Judiciary Act of 2021, which would increase the number of Supreme Court justices from nine to 13.

FFRF also considers court expansion as the only way to redress the injustice of two stolen seats under then-Senate Majority Leader **Mitch McConnell**. McConnell denied a hearing of **President Obama’s** Supreme Court nominee **Merrick Garland** under the spurious excuse that it was a presidential election year in 2016, then rushed onto the court **Amy Coney Barrett** in the midst of the 2020 national election.

FFRF is also urging the passage of the **Supreme Court Ethics, Recusal,**

and Transparency (SCERT) Act. So far, 60 lawmakers have co-sponsored the legislation, which would require Supreme Court justices to “adopt and follow a code of ethics, places transparency standards on gifts and travel, codifies recusal standards and requires the court to disclose lobbying and dark money interests before it.” This common-sense piece of legislation would help restore some public trust of the court.

Additional results of interest from the poll include that 61 percent oppose the Supreme Court’s **Dobbs v. Jackson** decision to overturn **Roe v. Wade**. This number is more than double the number who support the court’s decision.

The poll shows overwhelming support to allow abortion in cases of rape and incest (90 percent) and overwhelming opposition (82 percent) to a

state making it illegal for a woman to travel across state lines for legal abortion care. Likewise, respondents in significant numbers (76 percent) oppose state laws to ban medication abortion or to allow pharmacists to refuse to fill such prescriptions.

A tad over 70 percent support the 2015 Supreme Court’s decision in **Obergefell v. Hodges** affirming

marriage equality, a ruling put in jeopardy by the majority opinion in **Dobbs**. **Justice Clarence Thomas**, now empowered by an ultraconservative majority, has openly urged that the right to marriage equality also be decided by each state.

FFRF is also pleased to see that more than half (52 percent) of respondents seldom or never report attending religious church services, and that 31 percent say they have “no religion.” Most (73 percent) do not identify as “born-again” or evangelical Christians.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation will continue to advocate for an independent federal judiciary that will uphold the constitutional principle of separation of state and church, and is gratified to see that the majority of the public is with us on the need to expand the high court.

The latest Marquette Law Poll Supreme Court survey was conducted Sept. 7-14, 2022, interviewing 1,448 adults nationwide and has a margin of error of plus/minus 3.4 percentage points.



Iranian Woman Killed By Morality Police

atheistalliance.org

Mehsa Amini was a 22-year-old woman detained by the morality police for wearing an improper hijab, was beaten in their custody, went into a coma, and later passed away in a hospital.



Metro station, according to accounts posted on social media. The police claimed they would take her to the Morality Police Center for a briefing session and then release her, according to her brother, who was with her at the time.

According to claims from witnesses and social media users, she was abused both inside the detention facility and in the patrol car. Two hours after being moved to the Tehran Detention Center, Mahsa's body was transported by ambulance to Kasra Hospital.

Mahsa, who was from the western Iranian city of Saqqez, traveled to Tehran with her family to visit her relatives. The morality police in Tehran reportedly detained Mahsa on the evening of September 16 at the Haghani

Mahsa suffered a stroke at the police station a few hours later, and an ambulance transported her to the hospital.

Despite the fact that the reports said she had
Mehsa Amini Continued on Page 5

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been assaulted to the point of brain death, the police made no mention of the assault in the notice they released and instead only mentioned the unexpected onset of her cardiac condition while holding counseling classes at the moral security center.

Mahsa Amini's face injuries and ear bleeding in the hospital indicate that a hard object must have struck her head, and the bruises under her eyes indicate that the cause of her hospitalization was not a heart condition at all.

Mahsa was being transported to the detention facility in the same police van as another witness, who was also one of those arrested. He told the news agencies, "Along the way, a fierce discussion took place between the detainees and the officers, and Mahsa and I were among those who protested our arrest." The cops used physical force in an attempt to silence us all throughout these debates. Mahsa was also assaulted at the same time, but she remained conscious until she reached the detention facility.

The news of Mahsa's death as a result of the hijab mandate shocked Iran and the rest of the world and incited a wave of rage. People swiftly responded to these terrible incidents with the hashtags #MahsaAmini and #مهسا_امینی to the numerous messages about the Morality Police's inhuman actions that were posted on Twitter.

Iranian activist **Hossein Ronaghi** stated, "This is the image of our Iran. The true Iran that the regime's lobby and NIAC hide from you! A young girl was beaten, abused, and arrested by government agents because of her headscarf. Now she's in a coma. What's even more bitter is that the world has long ignored these crimes."

The family of Mahsa Amini also provides information on the pressure put on them by the security forces and their efforts to keep this occurrence quiet.

Numerous Iranian residents gathered in front of

Kasra Hospital in Tehran, where Mahsa Amini passed away two days after being arrested and abused according to videos posted on social media and accounts from media activists. These accounts state that security personnel confronted the demonstrators and detained a number of them. The security guards are seen in the videos attempting to scatter the demonstrators in front of Kasra Hospital.

After the funeral mass for Mahsa Amini on Saturday, the Saqqez residents gathered in protest, and the Islamic Republic's security forces began firing tear gas and opening fire to disperse them. Social media users have posted videos that demonstrate the high level of security in Saqqez and including the sound of gunfire. Additionally, news outlets have noted a significant drop in internet speed in this city.



Mahsa was murdered by the police just because her hijab did not match the Iranian authorities' expectations; nonetheless, this was not the first event and it won't be the last. The Morality police who beat Mahsa were the same officers who, two months earlier, violently used tools for hunting animals to force a resisting woman into a police van after she was detained for not wearing the proper hijab, setting off a wave of outrage. They were also the same officers who, two months ago, violently threw a mother to the ground while she screamed for the release of her daughter from inside the Morality police car.

The police of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been attempting to carry out the unethical and immoral principles of Islam for four decades by inciting terror, doing it in the worst manner possible, and subjecting its citizens to the harshest forms of torture, harm,

and death. The supreme leader of the Islamic Republic has repeatedly and directly communicated these orders to the police and security agents, who turned the murder of **George Floyd** in the US into his anti-American propaganda show, but who do not give a damn about dead Iranian youth. The Islamic regime does not care whether you are at home, on the street, or in a detention center, and it does not even show mercy to prisoners.

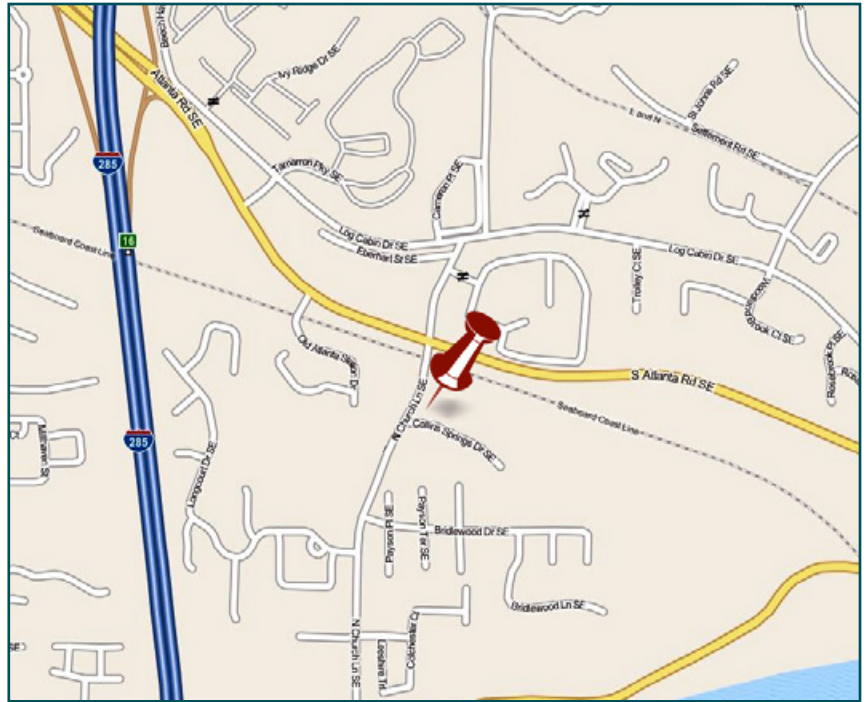
The outrage and discontent of every citizen has been sparked by these inhumane actions, not just that of critics. The horrible incident that happened to Mahsa Amini must now be watched to see what effects it has on the Islamic Regime in Iran.

*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

**Massimo Pigliucci
10/9/22 1:00 pm EST
(via Zoom)**



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