

Information Science and Technology Seminar Series



Daniel Dennett, Co-Director
Center for Cognitive Studies
Tufts University

"Practical vs. 'Theoretical' Free Will"

Thursday, March 22, 2012

4:00 - 5:00 PM

TA-3, Bldg. 1690, Room 102 (CNLS Conference Room)

Abstract: Recently quite a few scientists have formed a chorus proclaiming that recent work in neuroscience shows that free will is 'an illusion'. Certainly some conceivable varieties of free will are illusory, but are all? Are colors an illusion? Are dollars an illusion? Are living things an illusion? Underestimating the anchorings and implications of the folk concept of free will is leading to a lot of dubious declaration.

Biography: Daniel C. Dennett, the author of *Breaking the Spell* (Viking, 2006), *Freedom Evolves* (Viking Penguin, 2003) and *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (Simon & Schuster, 1995), is University Professor and Austin B. Fletcher Professor of Philosophy, and Co-Director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Tufts University. He lives with his wife in North Andover, Massachusetts, and has a daughter, a son, and three grandchildren. He was born in Boston in 1942, the son of a historian by the same name, and received his B.A. in philosophy from Harvard in 1963. He then went to Oxford to work with Gilbert Ryle, under whose supervision he completed the D.Phil. in philosophy in 1965. He taught at U.C. Irvine from 1965 to 1971, when he moved to Tufts, where he has taught ever since, aside from periods visiting at Harvard, Pittsburgh, Oxford, the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, the London School of Economics and the American University of Beirut.

He was the Co-founder (in 1985) and Co-director of the Curricular Software Studio at Tufts, and has helped to design museum exhibits on computers for the Smithsonian Institution, the Museum of Science in Boston, and the Computer Museum in Boston.