

# In the Trenches: Teaching Critical Thinking Skills, 40 College Students at a Time

## Dr. Alan Peel University of Maryland

Dr. Peel will discuss his personal experience in teaching "Science and Pseudoscience", a course required as part of a living/learning program at the University of Maryland. Each year in this colloquium, about forty freshmen (per semester) confront the daunting tasks of learning how to ask the right questions and of developing a healthy, non-cynical skepticism. Peel will outline how he challenges them (especially about what they think 'science' is), how he has them challenge each other, and how he tries to make them challenge some of their own assumptions.

After seven years as an environmental scientist working in the hazardous waste cleanup industry in the 1990's, Alan Peel decided to head back to the ivory tower. He earned his PhD in physics at the University of California at Davis, focusing on phenomenology in cosmology: the art of keeping theorists honest by requiring them to use data (and then showing them how). A postdoc in Cambridge, UK with Stephen Hawking's group was followed by a postdoc position at the University of Maryland, College Park, where he is now a lecturer in

the Physics and Astronomy Departments and co-directs a living/learning program for undergraduates, "Science, Discovery and the Universe." In that program, he facilitates a colloquium which uses examples of pseudoscience and religion to focus on interdisciplinary issues regarding science and its role in society.

**Saturday, April 2, 2011  
1:30 pm**

**Bethesda Library, 7400 Arlington Rd.,  
Bethesda, Maryland  
Near Bethesda metro  
FREE admission – Everyone welcome,  
members and non-members**

For more information, call the 24-hour NCAS Sceptic Line recording at 301-587-3827.  
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