

# Department of Physics Colloquium



## Stuart Rojstaczer

Writer/UW-Madison Alumni

### Just Because We're Smart Doesn't Mean We're Crazy and Evil

Giving Scientists & Mathematicians a Fair Shake in Literary Fiction

**H**ow scientists are characterized in popular culture and the arts likely plays a role in how much impact their opinions and research results have upon society. I am well aware, given my lengthy history as a research scientist, that much good science gets willfully ignored and dismissed in the political arena and by the public partly because they have a negative view of scientists that comes from popular culture. As a writer of literary fiction, I feel a political obligation to portray scientists and their work with realistic depth. How does one get past the societal cliché of scientists and mathematicians being socially withdrawn, eccentric, emotionally stunted and ultimately less than human? One approach is to ignore this cliché entirely and to portray them as, more or less, ordinary people who happen to work as scientists and mathematicians. Another approach is to embrace the cliché initially in order to attract an audience and then to subvert it. This latter approach is the one I prefer and employed in my latest novel, *The Mathematician's Shiva*.



**Friday, October 23, 2015**

3:30 pm | 2241 Chamberlin Hall

Coffee & Cookies at 3:15 pm