



# Eugenie Scott: The Dover Trial and the Scientist Hat

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<https://peacefulscience.org/articles/scott-dover-science-hat/>

It is the fifteenth anniversary of the Dover Trial, so let's revisit Eugenie Scott's "scientist hat." Fifteen years ago, a public drama unfolded in Dover, Pennsylvania. In 2005, a school board tried to mandate teaching Intelligent Design (ID) in high school science class. This move provoked a lawsuit. The Dover Trial was billed as the Scopes Trial of this century, taking place 80 years later.

The Dover Trial itself is quite a story, but it was not the whole story. At the same time, a board in Kansas decided to showcase Intelligent Design by holding hearings on evolution of their own. The Kansas Hearings did not provoke a lawsuit. Some ID leaders see the Dover Trial as a regrettable mistake, while pointing to the Kansas hearings what they really hoped for. Most scientists, however, were not happy with either Dover or Kansas.

In December 2005, the Dover Trial came to an end, and could not have been worse for ID. A Republican judge ruled against them. This was in a federal court, so this ruling impacted ID's prospects in the

## References

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitzmiller\\_v.\\_Dover\\_Area\\_School\\_District](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitzmiller_v._Dover_Area_School_District)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scopes\\_Trial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scopes_Trial)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kansas\\_evolution\\_hearings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kansas_evolution_hearings)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenie\\_Scott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenie_Scott)

textbook wars across the nation. ID would not find its way into high school biology class.

Nathan Lents and I are interviewing Eugenie Scott about the Trial. Eugenie is a scientist. From 1986 till 2014, she was the Executive Director of the National Center for Science Education (NCSE), a non-profit science education organization. She played a pivotal role in engaging ID though the 1990s and 2000s.

In the aftermath of the Dover Trial, Eugenie offered an olive branch:

Properly understood, the principle of methodological [naturalism] requires neutrality towards God; we cannot say, wearing our scientist hats, whether God does or does not act.

Certainly methodological naturalism is contested among creationists, but her interpretation of it was irenic. She was offering an olive branch, and I was ready to take it. She is an atheist and a scientist, but she is not anti-religious. Perhaps there could be a way to peaceful science here.

<https://ncse.ngo/science-and-religion-methodology-and-humanism-0>  
<https://peacefulscience.org/articles/methodological-naturalism/>  
<https://peacefulscience.org/about/mission-and-values/>

15 Years After the  
**The Dover Trial**

**Eugenie Scott**

in dialogue with  
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