

5th IARC Cancer and Society Lecture

Tuesday 6 February 2018, 10h45 (Auditorium)

Professor Daniel R. Fagin

Director, Science, Health and Environmental Reporting Program (SHERP)

Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, New York University, USA

"From *Toms River* to Today: Science, Spin and Storytelling in Dark Times"

Programme

10:45 – 11:00, Director's News

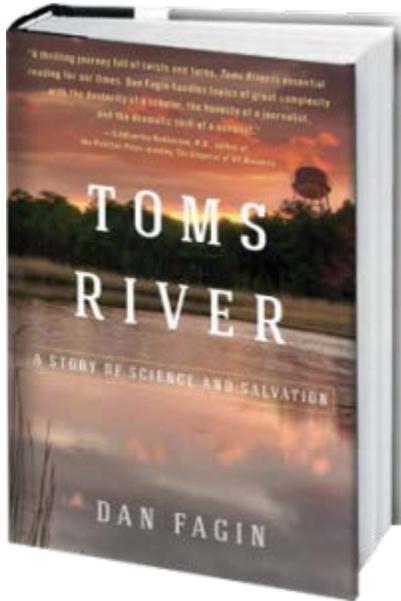
11:00 – 11:45, 5th IARC Cancer and Society Lecture

11:45 – 11:55, Questions session

11:55 – 12:00, Presentation of IARC Certificate

Abstract

The saga of the Toms River childhood cancer cluster carries profound lessons for today's scientists and advocates. The story that unfolded over decades in a small New Jersey town is both a cautionary tale and a possible path forward out of our current predicament, in which science is viewed with intense suspicion, tribal identification too often trumps evidence, and corporate power reigns supreme to the detriment of the public good. Then and now, researchers, clinicians, policymakers and the media can make progress only by maximizing transparency, leveraging networks, prioritizing trust-building and, most importantly, communicating effectively.



Biosketch

A Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who writes frequently about environmental science, Dan Fagin is also a science journalism professor at New York University (NYU). His bestselling book, *Toms River: A Story of Science and Salvation*, was awarded the 2014 Pulitzer for General Nonfiction, as well as the New York Public Library's Helen Bernstein Book Award for Excellence in Journalism, the National Academies Science Book Award and the Society of Environmental Journalists' Rachel Carson Environment Book Award, among other honors. A rave review in the *New York Times* described *Toms River* as “great journalism” and “a new classic of science reporting.” Dan's recent publications include *The New York Times*, *Scientific American*, *Nature* and *Slate*. His new book project is about monarch butterflies and the future of biodiversity in the Anthropocene.

At NYU, Dan is a Professor of Journalism (full) at the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute and the director of the masters-level [Science, Health and Environmental Reporting Program](#)(SHERP), one of the oldest and best-regarded science journalism training programs in the world, with more than 400 graduates since its founding in 1982. He is also the founder and director of the [Science Communication Workshops at NYU](#), four-week short courses in which more than 500 Ph.D. students, post-docs, medical students and professors at NYU have learned the basics of communicating scientific research effectively to the lay public.

Toms River: A Story of Science and Salvation was published in 2013 by the Bantam Books division of Random House. The paperback edition, with a new afterword from Dan, was published by Island Press in 2015. Two Chinese language editions were also published in 2015, by the Shanghai Translation



Publishing House (for China) and the Commonwealth Publishing Group (for Taiwan and overseas Chinese). A *New York Times* bestseller, *Toms River* has been described by reviewers as “a narrative of such irresistible momentum” (*The New York Times*), “a gripping environmental thriller” (*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review), “a crisp, hard-nosed probe into corporate arrogance and the power of public resistance” (*Publishers Weekly*), “required environmental reading” (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*), “a triumph” (*Nature*), “an epic tale of our chemical age” (Carl Zimmer), a “powerful and important book” (Elizabeth Kolbert), and “essential reading for our times” (Siddhartha Mukherjee). NPR and Kirkus both named *Toms River* one of their best books of 2013, and two major Chinese language newspapers, the *Beijing News* and the Taiwan-based *China Times*, named it a Book of the Year for 2015.

In its award citation, the Pulitzer Board said *Toms River* “deftly combines investigative reporting and historical research.” The citation for the Rachel Carson Environment Book Award citation called the book a “masterpiece” that “embodies Carson’s legacy of deeply insightful, science-based literary prose that helps readers better understand connections between public health and the environment.” Presenting Dan with the New York Public Library’s Helen Bernstein Book Award for Excellence in Journalism, library president Tony Marx said: “Dan Fagin epitomizes what the Bernstein Award is all about – powerful, in-depth reporting that informs the public, shapes policy, and changes the world.”

Dan is also the co-author of *Toxic Deception* (2002, Common Courage Press), which in its original hardcover edition was a finalist for the Investigative Reporters and Editors book prize in 1997. *The New York Times* called *Toxic Deception* “the story of the triumph of a special interest over the public interest.”

A native of Oklahoma City, Dan attended Dartmouth College, where he was the editor-in-chief and president of the college newspaper. He spent two years at the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* before joining *Newsday*, where he covered local and state politics and then assumed the environment beat. After 15 years covering environmental issues for *Newsday*, he joined the NYU faculty in 2005. He has been a Templeton-Cambridge Fellow in Science and Religion at the University of Cambridge and has also had fellowships at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and the Institute of Arctic Biology in Toolik Lake, Alaska. Dan is a former president and a proud member of the 1,200-member Society of Environmental Journalists, the oldest and largest association of journalists dedicated to improving the quality, accuracy and visibility of environmental coverage. He lives on Long Island with his wife, the legal journalist Alison Frankel. They have two grown daughters and a surfeit of cats. Dan is represented by Jane Dystel of Dystel, Goderich & Bourret LLC.