



HIST Symposium

“Chemistry Through the Eyes of Non-Chemists: Evolution of the Public Perception of Chemistry”

253rd American Chemical Society
National Meeting & Exposition

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Chemistry has often been misunderstood due to its complexity, the perception that it is only available to a small and exclusive circle of practitioners, and the general lack of awareness of how it can be rationally used and sometimes misused to attain specific goals. Over the past several centuries, chemistry has been seen by and presented to the public as both all-powerful and evil. The perception of chemistry over time has been affected by numerous factors, ranging from its ability to solve daunting technological problems and improve the quality of life to its capacity to cause, just as efficiently, harm and suffering. This symposium, sponsored by the ACS Division of the History of Chemistry (HIST), will trace the capricious evolution of the public image of chemistry and related scientific disciplines, as depicted by the arts and the popular media. It will attempt to explain how the changes in perception have been affected by various socio-economic factors and the potential of chemistry to enable either good or bad.

Symposium organizers:

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