

Freshman Seminar: Time Travel and Its Paradoxes

Christian Wüthrich

Spring 2010

Class schedule: Mon 9:00-10:50am (first group), HSS 7077
Mon 11:00am-12:50pm (second group), same location
Seminar will meet March 29; April 5, 12, 19.
Section ID: 685344 (9-11) or 685345 (11-1)
Website: <http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/faculty/wuthrich/>
Contact: Office hours are Th 3:30-5 and by appointment
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Have you ever wondered whether one can travel back in time to kill one's grandfather before he can sire any offspring? If so, this seminar is for you. We will discuss the logic, the philosophy and the physics of time travel and of time machines. We will do this primarily for our intellectual entertainment, but also in order to gain an introduction to some basic notions in the philosophy and metaphysics of science.

Prerequisites: Please contact the Undergraduate Advisor in Philosophy, Nancy Guerrero, for information concerning registration. Her phone number is 858-534-3077 and her email is neguerrero@ucsd.edu.

Required texts

For each meeting, the assigned texts must be read in advance, apart from the first meeting for which you don't need to read anything. All texts will be made available through e-reserves.

Course requirements and evaluation

Students will be expected to read the assigned chapters, come to discussion, and participate in discussion.

In addition, every student will be required to bring a written question (3 or 4 sentences) raised by the reading to every session after the first. These will form the basis of the class discussion, so it is essential that they be handed in every meeting.

All freshman seminars are graded P/NP. You must hand in written discussion questions at every meeting (after the first one) to receive a P in the course.

If you miss a class, you must make up the absence (in order to get credit) by submitting a half-page reflection on one of the readings assigned for the day you missed class.

Tentative schedule

Date	Topic and readings
29 March	Introduction to the topic <i>Primer</i> (2004)
5 April	The grandfather paradox and similar puzzles Ray Bradbury, "A Sound of Thunder", e-reserves Robert A Heinlein, "All you Zombies", e-reserves <i>Only if you have time</i> : Robert A Heinlein, "By his bootstrap", e-reserves
12 April	Some solutions to the grandfather paradox Chris Smeenk and Christian Wüthrich, "Time Travel and Time Machines", available online at http://philsci-archive.pitt.edu/archive/00004915/ ; only read the first ten pages. <i>Only if have time</i> : David Lewis, "The paradoxes of time travel", e-reserves
19 April	The physics of time travel Paul Davies, "How to Build a Time Machine", <i>Scientific American</i> , e-reserves <i>Only if you have time</i> : David Deutsch and Michael Lockwood, "The Quantum Physics of Time Travel", e-reserves

How to find a document on e-reserves

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