

Midterm Paper

Phil 146: Philosophy of Physics

Prof. Christian Wüthrich

due: 6 November 2007

Instructions

You are asked to submit an essay of 1,000 words ($\pm 10\%$, not counting the title and the bibliography, but including the footnotes). You must include a word count. Your essay must be clearly structured, precisely worded, validly argued, and diligently spell-checked. Be as concise as possible without compromising clarity. Because the essay you are asked to write is not long, I expect that you spend more thought on just how you want to organize your answer, as well as on rewriting the paper. There are some additional rules to keep in mind, as specified on the syllabus. The midterm exam is worth up to 30 points and must be submitted in class as well as to turnitin.com. You must enroll at turnitin.com by creating a new profile. You will need the following course information:

Class ID: 1931313

Enrollment Password: 599681

If you have any problems with using turnitin.com, please notify the UCSD Student Conduct Coordinator or his Assistant at 4-0778.

Topics

Choose one of the following topics to write about:

1. Devise a paper topic of your own by clearly stating a thesis and defend it. The topic must be closely related to what we have done so far in class. If you chose this option, I strongly urge you to clear your topic with me by sending me a description of your topic by email in advance. In this way you avoid losing points for writing off-topic.
2. Defend one of the three metaphysical positions concerning time that we have discussed in class. In your defence, consider the weaknesses of your chosen position as we have discussed them in class and in the readings.
3. Is time travel possible? Don't try to be comprehensive in your answer. Rather focus on a particular argument or some arguments that claim to establish that time travel is impossible and critically evaluate it. You can choose among the arguments discussed in class or in the readings. You may also opt to consider some of the following issues: could time-travellers change the past? Why or why not? What is the notion of "compossibility" and how does Lewis use it in analysing the paradoxes of time travel? What are causal loops and how are they possible? **Warning: if you choose this topic, be extra careful to be clear.**
4. What is at issue between absolute and relational views of space? Describe in detail Newton's bucket experiment. What is it supposed to demonstrate? Give a possible relationist response. Which side of the debate do you think is more convincing? Why? If you choose this topic, you may have to read ahead a little bit: the relevant material is covered in Dainton, chapters 9-12.