Inventing Reality: First Paper – Book Review
(Due by Wednesday, March 24)

Assignment: Read a book and write a review of it.

Topic: The subject of the book can be anything related to this course (it doesn’t have to be about astronomy or physics – this course is broad in scope and touches upon many areas and the selection of books that can be read is similarly broad.) It is highly desirable (but not absolutely required) that the book’s subject be related to the topic area of your proposed final project.

Format: Your review should focus mainly on your interpretation of the book. What did you find interesting? Dull? What previous knowledge was assumed on the part of the reader? Naturally, the content of the book must be included, but it should not be the primary focus of your review. When writing the review, assume that an intelligent audience will be reading it, but not one who already knows intimately about your book’s subject.

Length: Anything you want. As with the Final Project, quality counts more than quantity.

→We are essentially looking for two things with this paper:

1. How well written your report is. That is, are you able to express your thoughts in an understandable way? Remember, you are explaining the subject you are writing about – don’t assume that the reader knows it already! (A good way to see how well you are conveying your ideas is to read the report to a friend, and see if they can follow your thoughts.) The more clearly you write, the more the reader is able to get the sense that you thought about what you read and took the time to make it understandable. To get assistance with your writing, consider visiting Hampshire College’s Writing Center, a resource that students have found to be quite useful in the past.

2. Content of the report. Did you effectively strike a balance between discussing the information content of the book and your own opinions about it? Remember, though the bulk of the review should be your appraisal of the work, enough background information should be provided to justify why you have formed the opinions you have about it. Also, did you understand the book? Were some parts confusing to you? Why?

→To get an idea what type of report to shoot for, we have placed on reserve at the Library Center sample reviews from former students that were judged to be particularly good. You will see that they vary quite a lot in content and form from one another.