Inventing Reality: Final Paper – Book Review  
(Due by Friday, June 10, at 5 PM)

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.)

Format: Your review should focus on three areas; you may choose to intertwine them, or keep them more distinct in your narrative, it is up to you. The most important thing to keep in mind when writing the review is to make it understandable: assume that an intelligent audience will be reading it, but not one who already knows intimately about your book’s subject. So, focus your review around:

1. The content of the book. While this should not make up the bulk of your review, it is necessary to broadly outline the book’s content, in order to frame your discussion of it. Give enough detail so that the reader can fully understand the ensuing discussion.

2. Your interpretation of the book. What did you find interesting? Dull? What previous knowledge was assumed on the part of the reader? This is the most important component of your review.

3. How the book relates to the content of our class. Demonstrate here that you have thought about your book in the broader context of what you have learned in Inventing Reality. Again, you may choose to have a separate section about this, or to just incorporate it throughout your review.

Length: As always, quality is more important than quantity, but I would expect 3 – 5 pages to be a typical length.

Grading: This paper will be worth 20% of your course grade, and I will be evaluating it primarily on:

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.

2. Content of your 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, I will place on reserve at Millikan sample reviews from former students that I thought were particularly good. You will see that they vary quite a lot in content and form from one another.

Important Dates to Remember:

1. 5 PM Thursday, May 26: Email me your proposed book title, and a brief description of it. Then, bring the book with you to our evening class – if I am unfamiliar with it, I may want to have a look before formally approving it!

2. 5 PM Friday, June 10: Book review due. You may either turn it in to me directly, or else leave it in my mailbox on the first floor of Robinson. No late papers will be accepted.