

Subject 24.118. Paradox and Infinity. Fall 2001

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Office hours are Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00, or by appointment.

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We'll study a sample of paradoxes, paying particular attention to paradoxes about the connection between language and the world. The readings for the class have been assembled into a reader, which you can pick up at the MIT Copy Technology Center, in the basement of building 11, room 11-004.

You will be asked to complete a problem set each week. I would encourage you to discuss the problems with one another and to work together in figuring out how to solve them. However, when you write up the solutions to turn them in, write them up by yourself without looking at anyone else's work. This is important, since how well you do on the problem sets will determine your grade. There will be no tests or final exam.

The following schedule is tentative and approximate:

Sept. 6. Zeno's paradox.

Sept. 11. NO CLASS. I'll be out of town.

Sept. 13. Read Quine.

Sept. 18-27. The Liar paradox and its relatives. Read Tarski.

Oct. 2-11. Computability. Gödel's theorem. Read Boolos, "A New Proof of Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem."

Oct. 9. NO CLASS. Veteran's Day.

Oct. 16-18. Gödel's Second Incompleteness Theorem. Read Boolos, "Gödel's Second Incompleteness Theorem Explained in Words of One Syllable."

Oct. 23-25. Read Lucas.

Oct. 30-Nov. 6. The Liar paradox again. Read Kripke.

Nov. 13-20. The Hangman paradox. Read Montague and Kaplan.

Nov. 22. NO CLASS. Thanksgiving.

Nov. 27-29. The Sorites paradox. Read McGee and McLaughlin.

Dec. 4-11. The problem of the many. Read Unger.