

Guesstimation: Solving the World's Problems on the Back of a Cocktail Napkin



Prof. Lawrence Weinstein

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Why don't we all drive electric cars? What is the value of recycling that plastic water bottle? If the Sun were made of gerbils, would the Earth be incinerated? A physicist should be able to estimate the answer to those (or any other question) to within a factor of ten. This talk will cover the principles of estimating, introduce the "Goldilocks" categories of answers, and then apply those principles to some of the big (and small) questions of our time, including: Are space elevators possible? Gasoline or electric cars? Should we pee before flying?

BIO: Lawrence Weinstein is the author of "Guesstimation: Solving the world's problems on the back of a cocktail napkin" (with John Adam) and "Guesstimation 2.0: Solving today's problems on the back of a napkin" (soon to be a major motion picture), both published by Princeton University Press. Guesstimation has been featured in the New York Times and translated into several languages. He also edits the monthly Fermi Problems column for the journal "The Physics Teacher". Weinstein is Eminent Scholar and University Professor of Physics at Old Dominion University. He received the Virginia Outstanding Faculty Award in 2009. In his spare time, he smashes atoms at the Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility for which he was named a Fellow of the American Physical Society.

Wednesday

August 24

4:00 P.M.

Rm 118 NSH

Refreshments
in Rm 202 NSH
@ 3:30 pm