

WHY WATER IS WEIRD

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All life on Earth needs water to survive. But increasingly it seems that the characteristics that make water a solvent for life are also those that make it the weirdest of liquids. Some of these quirks of 'life's matrix' are well understood; others are still being debated, sometimes furiously and controversially. I will explore what we do and don't know about water, ending with a consideration both of how its behaviour in living cells can offer clues for new purification technologies and of whether its unique role for life on Earth makes it a prerequisite for life on other worlds.

FRIDAY,
10.06.2016

2:00 PM

CFEL
SEMINAR ROOMS I-III

