Metaphysics (PHIL10155)  
Course Guide 2020/21

Course Organiser:  
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I hope to be offering office hours as well but they will obviously be contingent on how the re-opening of University proceeds in the wake of Covid-19. So look out for further announcements but chats via (e.g.) Skye or Teams will be possible regardless.

Course Secretary:  
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Course Aims and Objectives

In keeping with the course remit of offering a detailed introduction to one perennially interesting, central, topic in metaphysics, this year Metaphysics (PHIL10155) will consist of detailed seminars and accompanying tutorials on key philosophical issues in the philosophy of time. Coverage is largely with an analytical slant but including some classic historical issues too. Students should end this course conversant with a range of significant metaphysical (and other) issues surrounding time. No detailed logical, scientific or metaphysical expertise will be assumed, and the course is intended to be accessible to students with a wide range of philosophical interests and aptitudes.

Intended Learning Outcomes

To develop further the philosophical skills, and to extend and deepen the philosophical knowledge, acquired in previous philosophy courses. Transferable skills that students will acquire or hone in taking this course should include the following:

- written skills (through summative essays)
- oral communication skills (through lecturer-led and/or student-led seminar discussions)
- analytical skills (through exploring a carefully-chosen series of philosophical texts)
- ability to recognise and critically assess an argument.

Lecture Times and Locations

Semester One

Day/ Time: Again, this is all rather contingent on how re-opening proceeds. However please note that: i) all lecture content is already available in pre-recorded form on the LEARN page for this course, and ii) we have resources to allow this course to proceed fully online if required. I hope to have (at the very least) small group face-to-face meetings but rest assured, the course can carry on as planned even if direct meetings prove impracticable. (I have delivered entire courses electronically before, I stress.)
Lecture Content and Readings
*** Please note: electronic alternatives to print resources can always be provided if (e.g.) the Main Library proves difficult of access. There is no irreplaceable reading that is only available in print. As always, please ask if I can help at all. ***

Main texts:
• Barry Dainton, *Time and Space*, first edition Chesham, Acumen, 2001, second edition Durham Acumen 2010, multiple copies should be available in the Library Hub Reserve (at shelf-mark BD632 Dai). Virtually all the material we will be covering can be found in either edition of Dainton’s (wonderful) book.

Highly recommended:

Please note that the following lists of readings are prioritised, with the most important / useful readings at the top. So the recommended way to tackle the suggested readings is to start at the top of each list and work downwards.

**If you read only one thing for each seminar, please tackle the reading at the top of each list.**

As always, if you’ve any problems please let me know.

*Week 1*
Introduction – A Brief History of the History of Time.
The Essential Tension: Time as Series and as Flow.
Recommended reading:
• Barry Dainton, *Time and Space*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-12 (either 2001 or 2010 editions).
Useful background / of related interest:

*Week 2*
Plato and Aristotle
Recommended reading:

Useful background / of related interest:

**Week 3**

Sextus Empiricus, St. Augustine and Peter Damian.

Recommended reading:
- Philip Turetzky, *Time*, Chapter 3, pp. 30-42, but particularly pp. 30-34; Chapter 5, pp. 56-70, but particularly, pp. 56-62.

Useful background / of related interest:

**Week 4**

McTaggart on the Unreality of Time (part one).

Recommended reading:
- J. M. E. McTaggart, ‘The Unreality of Time’, taken from Chapter 33 of *The Nature of Existence* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1921), and also reprinted in Le Poidevin and MacBeath, (edd.), pp. 23-34. See also original version published as ‘The Unreality of Time’, *Mind*, 17, 1908: 457-74.

Useful background / of related interest:

Week 5
McTaggart on the Unreality of Time (part two).
Recommended reading: as above for week 4, plus:
Useful background / of related interest:

Week 6
• Absolutism and Relationalism About Time.
• Recommended reading:
  • Philip Turetzky, Time, Chapter 6: 71-84.
• Useful background / of related interest:
  • H. G. Alexander, (Editor), The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, Manchester, University of Manchester Press, 1956, esp. editor’s Introduction.

Week 7
Tense and Tenseless; Static and Dynamic.
• Philip Turetzky, Time, Chapter 10: 137-55.
Useful background / of related interest:

Week 8
Three-Dimensionalism vs. Four-Dimensionalism (Endurantism vs. Perdurantism).

Useful background / of related interest:

Week 9
Questions of Topology: Linear, Branching or Multi-Dimensional?

Useful background / of related interest:

Week 10
The Directionality of Time (and Causation)

Useful background / of related interest:

Week 11
Recapitulation / Revision.
Assessment Information
This course will be assessed by means of two essays per student.

1. A short (no more than 1,500 word) essay (40% overall mark):
Due no later than 12 pm Thursday 22\textsuperscript{nd} October 2020.

2. A final long (no more than 2,500 word) essay (55% overall mark):
Due no later than 12 pm Thursday 10\textsuperscript{th} December 2020.

3. Please note 5% of the total mark is based on participation.
Participation marks will be awarded on the basis of your course organiser’s assessment of frequency and quality of contribution, in accordance with the Common Marking Scheme guidelines and the accompanying grade descriptors. Contributions can be made electronically, e.g. via e-mail and can include (e.g.) questions (in class or outside, short comprehensions on assigned readings, etc. Closing date is the end of teaching in the semester concerned.
Essay Questions

Below are some suggested questions intended to cover both the short mid-term (no more than 1,500 word) and final (no more than 2,500 word) essays.

Do please answer different questions for your mid-term and final essays.

Please note that for long essay purposes, students should be prepared to supplement the suggested readings above, either through their own research and/or through consultation with course organiser. As always, additional / alternative readings can be provide on request – please just ask.

1) Compare and critically contrast Heraclitean and Parmenidean conceptions of time and change.
   Reading as for week 1.

2) Does the ‘sea fight’ problem of future contingents suggest that the future is indeterminate?
   Reading as for week 2.

3) How did McTaggart try to establish the unreality of time and did he succeed?
   Reading as for weeks 4 and 5.

4) Compare and critically contrast tensed and tenseless views of time.
   Reading as for week 7

5) Compare and critically contrast perdurantist and endurantist approaches to persistence.
   Reading as for week 8.

6) Is a linear topology for time the only one acceptable?
   Reading as for week 9.

*** Again, additional / alternative readings and/or questions can always be provided on request. The above are prompts merely. ***
Feedback

It’s very important that you should know what sort of standard of feedback you can expect on my courses and how quickly I aim to turn work around. I aim to make my feedback as useful as I can and to help you pinpoint not only those areas where improvement might be indicated but also those areas where you’ve done well. Please note that besides written feedback on summative work and draft work, you can also obtain feedback by making an appointment to see me, by sending me questions or concerns via e-mail.

For short or long essays, I aim to complete coversheets and return work electronically within three working weeks of initial submission.

If you’ve any questions relating to feedback or any other aspect of the course, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

Please Note

This course is completely independent of my Honours option course ‘Philosophy of Time Travel’. Some topics inevitably may reflect each other across the two courses but neither course is required for the other.