Metaphysics (PHIL10155) Course Guide 2018/19

Course Organiser:
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Office hours (term time): Mondays 3-5 pm, Thursdays 1–3 pm

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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

Second semester: Fridays 11.00 – 13.00, 7 George Square, F.21
Lecture Content and Readings

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. 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:

Useful background / of related interest:

**Week 2**
Plato and Aristotle
Recommended reading:
- W. von Leyden, ‘Time, Number, and Eternity in Plato and Aristotle’, *The
Philosophical Quarterly, 14, 1964: 35-52.*

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:
- Denis Corish, ‘McTaggart’s Argument’, *Philosophy*, 80, 2005: 77-99.*

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:
- Useful background / of related interest:

**Week 7**
- Tense and Tenseless; Static and Dynamic.
- 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 28th February 2019

2. A final long (no more than 2,500 word) essay (60% overall mark):
Due no later than 12 pm Thursday 25th April 2019
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. Please answer different questions for your mid-term and final essays. Please note that for long essay purposes, students will be expected to supplement the suggested readings above, either though their own research and/or through consultation with course organiser.

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

2) Does the ‘sea fight’ problem of future contingents force us to conclude that the future is unreal? 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.

Additional / alternative readings and/or questions can be provided on request.
Selected Additional References / Further Reading

Selected on-line resources:


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.