(PHIL10144)
Philosophy of Time Course Guide
2017/18

Course Organiser:
Dr. Alasdair Richmond, A.Richmond@ed.ac.uk
Dugald Stewart Building, room 6.11, 0131 650 3656
Office hours (term time): Mondays 3-5 pm Thursdays 1–3 pm

Course Secretary:
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Department of Philosophy
School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences
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Course Aims and Objectives

This course will offer detailed seminars on key philosophical issues in the philosophy of time, largely with an analytical slant but covering 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)
- presentation skills (through giving and criticising student presentations)
- analytical skills (through exploring a carefully-chosen series of philosophical texts)
- ability to recognise and critically assess an argument.

Lecture Times and Locations

**First semester:** Tuesdays 09.00 – 10.50

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:**
- Robin Le Poidevin and Murray MacBeath, (edd.), *The Philosophy of Time, (Oxford Readings in Philosophy)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, multiple copies are available in the Library Hub Reserve (at shelf-mark *BD638 Phi*).

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, read the top one.

**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:
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)
• David Lewis, ‘Counterfactual Dependence and Time’s Arrow’, Noûs, 13, 1979: 455-76.

Useful background / of related interest:

Week 11
Recapitulation / Revision.

Assessment Information
This course will be assessed by a mixture of written and presented instruments of assessment, which will encourage not merely written responses but active participation in the seminar from all students.

1. A short presentation (10% overall mark):
   Generally at the relevant seminar but no later than the end of teaching. NB. To be submitted electronically to A.Richmond@ed.ac.uk

2. A short (no more than 1,500 word) essay (40% overall mark):
   Due no later than Thursday 26th October 2017, by 12 pm

3. A final long (no more than 2,000 word) essay (50% overall mark):
   Due no later than Thursday 14th of December 2017 by 12 pm

4. Only for Honours students doing one of the long essays for the coursework dissertation option:

Coursework Dissertation Decision
Notify Teaching Office which course you will be completing the dissertation on by Monday 23rd October by 12 pm

Coursework Dissertation Essay Hand In
No later than Tuesday 19th December 2017 by 12 pm

Word Count Penalties

Essays must not exceed the word limit, which includes footnotes but excludes bibliography. The precise word count must be written on the coversheet. Overlong
essays will be penalised according to the following rule: 5% will be deducted for every 100 words, or part thereof, over the word limit. So, 1-100 words over lose 5%; 101-200 words over lose 10%; 201-300 words over lose 15%; and so on.

Penalties for Late Submission of Essays

Unless an extension has been granted, essays must be submitted by the dates shown in the table of Submission Dates below. Essays submitted late without an extension may not be marked, but, if marked, will incur a penalty (in accordance with section 3.8 of the University Undergraduate Assessment Regulations at: http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Regulations/TaughtAssessmentRegulations2013-14.PDF

For each working day that the work is late there will be a reduction of the mark by 5% of the maximum obtainable mark (e.g. a mark of 65% on the common marking scale would be reduced to 60% up to 24 hours later). This penalty applies for up to five working days, after which a mark of zero will be given.

Please note - Regulation 14 Assessment deadlines: Student responsibilities

It is a student’s responsibility to ascertain and meet his or her assessment deadlines, including examination times and locations.

Presentations

You can elect to do your presentation in one of two ways.

EITHER:

a) Give a short (c. 10 minute) presentation summarising/criticising one or more of the assigned course readings, ideally at the seminar for which the reading(s) is (are) assigned. If you like, PowerPoint slides or a handout can be used but these are not compulsory.

OR:

b) Submit a short comprehension text (up to 1,000 words long) summarising/criticising one or more of the assigned course readings.

I would stress that either option a) or option b) is fine by me. However, whichever format you adopt, please submit the text of your presentation electronically to me (A.Richmond@ed.ac.uk), NOT to the Teaching Office. Experience from previous years suggests that it’s vital that I have a record of receipt of presentations.
Essay Questions

Below are some suggested questions for the **short mid-term** (no more than 1,500 word) essay. The same questions may be used for the **longer final** (no more than 3,000 word) essay but 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.

**Additional / alternative readings and/or questions can be provided on request.**

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.

**Selected Additional References / Further Reading**

- Peter Geach, ‘Some Problems About Time’, *Proceedings of the British*
Academy, LI, 1966, 321-36.


**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. Because there are three units of assessment for this course (presentation, short essay and long essay), I’m afraid I will not be undertaking to mark or make comments on draft work. However, please note that besides written feedback on summative work, you can also obtain feedback by making an appointment to see me, by sending me questions or concerns via e-mail. For written feedback, I aim to produce a completed comments–sheet with a mixture of quantitative and qualitative feedback for each and every piece of work you submit.

For **short or long essays**, I aim to complete coversheets and return work electronically within **three working weeks** of initial submission. Turn-around for presentations can typically be a lot faster, but to be on the safe side, let’s say that you’ll get your **presentations** back within **no more than ten working days** 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.

**Useful Information**

i. 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.

ii. Students may elect to do their presentation on the same topic as either their short or long essays, but I would greatly prefer it if short and long essays were on different topics. So, you may elect to do two of your three units of assessment on the same topic but no more than two.