

# Philosophy 741

## *Seminar in Metaphysics*

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### Course Overview

This seminar will be a fast-paced gambol through a large number of classic and recent works in the metaphysics of time, focusing mainly on such central topics as McTaggart's argument, the rate of passage argument, the dynamic theory, the static theory, four-dimensionalism, three-dimensionalism, the possibility of time without change, presentism, eternalism, the growing ontology view, time travel, the open future, and the moving spotlight theory. Students should come away from the course with a reasonable understanding of some of the most important issues in the philosophy of time (and perhaps with some opinions on those issues).

### Course Requirements

- ❖ **Four short (10-minute) class presentations** (collectively worth 25% of final grade). Each presentation should focus on your response to one main point or argument from the reading – ideally this will be the most important point or argument. (Note: When you are presenting, you should not try to summarize the entire reading assignment.) For each presentation you should prepare a 1-page handout.
- ❖ **8 sets of discussion questions** (collectively worth 25% of final grade). For each day when you are not presenting, you will be responsible for submitting 3-4 discussion questions for each of the readings on the schedule that day. These questions must be submitted via email, by noon on the relevant day.
- ❖ **One term paper** (approximately 5,000-6,000 words (15-18 pages); worth 50% of final grade) on an approved topic.

## Readings

- ❖ Beer, Michelle, "Temporal Indexicals and the Passage of Time," *The Philosophical Quarterly* **38** (1988), pp. 158-164.
- ❖ Bernstein, Sara, "Nowhere Man: Time Travel and Spatial Location," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* **39** (2015), pp. 158-168.
- ❖ Besson, Corine, and Hattiangadi, Anandi, "The Open Future, Bivalence and Assertion," *Philosophical Studies* **167** (2014), pp. 251-271.
- ❖ Briggs, Ray, and Forbes, Graeme, "The Growing-Block: Just One Thing After Another?" *Philosophical Studies* **174** (2017), pp. 927-943.
- ❖ Emery, Nina, "Actualism, Presentism and the Grounding Objection," *Erkenntnis* (2018).
- ❖ Emery, Nina, "Actualism Without Presentism? Not by way of the Relativity Objection," *Nous* **52** (2018), pp. 1-24.
- ❖ Frischhut, Akiko, "What Experience Cannot Teach Us About Time," *Topoi* **1** (2013), pp. 1-13.
- ❖ Hawley, Katherine, "Review of Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*," *Nous* **40** (2006), pp. 380-393.
- ❖ Keller, Simon, "Presentism and Truthmaking," in Dean Zimmerman (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* **1** (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 83-104.
- ❖ Lewis, Davis K., "The Paradoxes of Time Travel," *American Philosophical Quarterly* **13** (1976), pp. 145-152.
- ❖ Markosian, Ned, "A Defense of Presentism," in Dean Zimmerman (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* **1** (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 47-82.
- ❖ Markosian, Ned, "On Language and the Passage of Time," *Philosophical Studies* **66** (1992), pp. 1-26.
- ❖ Markosian, Ned, "Time and Persistence," MS (2019).
- ❖ Markosian, Ned, "The Truth About the Past and the Future," in Fabrice Correia and Andrea Iacona (eds.), *Around the Tree: Semantic and Metaphysical Issues Concerning Branching and the Open Future* (Springer, 2013), pp. 127-141

- ❖ McTaggart, John McTaggart Ellis, *The Nature of Existence* (Cambridge University Press, 1927), Volume II, Book V, Chapter 33. Reprinted as "Time" in Richard M. Gale (ed.), *The Philosophy of Time* (Macmillan Press, 1968), pp. 86-97.
- ❖ Miller, Kristie, "The Cresting Wave: A New Moving Spotlight Theory," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* **49** (2019), pp. 94-122.
- ❖ Miller, Kristie, "Time Travel and the Open Future," *Disputatio* **1** (2005), pp. 223-232.
- ❖ Paul, L.A. "Temporal Experience," *The Journal of Philosophy* **107** (2010), pp. 333-359.
- ❖ Price, Marjorie S., "Identity Through Time," *The Journal of Philosophy* **74** (1977), pp. 201-217.
- ❖ Prior, Arthur N., "Changes in Events and Changes in Things," in Arthur N. Prior, *Papers on Time and Tense* (Oxford University Press, 1968).
- ❖ Prior, Arthur N., "Thank Goodness That's Over," *Philosophy* **34** (1959), pp. 12-17.
- ❖ Quine, W.V., "Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis," *The Journal of Philosophy* **47** (1950), pp. 621-633.
- ❖ Shoemaker, Sydney, "Time Without Change," *The Journal of Philosophy* **66** (1969), pp. 363-381.
- ❖ Sider, Theodore, "Four-Dimensionalism," *Philosophical Review* **106** (1987), pp. 197-231.
- ❖ Smart, J.J.C., "The River of Time," in Antony Flew (ed.), *Essays in Conceptual Analysis* (St. Martin's Press, 1966), pp. 213-227.
- ❖ Smith, Quentin, "Problems with the New Tenseless Theory of Time," *Philosophical Studies* **52** (1987), pp. 371-392.
- ❖ Sullivan, Meghan, "Change We Can Believe In (and Assert)," *Nous* **48** (2014), pp. 474-495.
- ❖ Sullivan, Meghan, "Problems for Temporary Existence in Tense Logic," *Philosophy Compass* **7** (2012), pp. 43-57.

- ❖ Thomson, Judith Jarvis, "Parthood and Identity Across Time," *The Journal of Philosophy* **80** (1983), pp. 201-220.
- ❖ Williams, Donald C., "The Myth of Passage," *The Journal of Philosophy* **48** (1951), pp. 457-472.

## Schedule

- Sep 4 Course intro
- 11 McTaggart, "Time" (1927)  
Smart, "The River of Time" (1949)
- 18 Quine, "Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis" (1950)  
Williams, "The Myth of Passage" (1951)  
Prior, "Thank Goodness That's Over" (1959)
- 25 Prior, "Changes in Events and Changes in Things" (1968)  
Shoemaker, "Time Without Change" (1969)
- Oct 2 Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (1976)  
Price, "Identity Through Time" (1977)  
Thomson, "Parthood and Identity Across Time" (1983)
- 9 Smith, "Problems with the New Tenseless Theory of Time" (1987)  
Beer, "Temporal Indexicals and the Passage of Time" (1988)  
Markosian, "On Language and the Passage of Time" (1992)
- 16 Sider, "Four-Dimensionalism" (1997)  
Hawley, "Review of Sider" (2006)
- 23 Markosian, "A Defense of Presentism" (2004)  
Keller, "Presentism and Truthmaking" (2004)  
Markosian, "The Truth About the Past and the Future" (2013)
- 30 Miller, "Time Travel and the Open Future" (2005)  
Besson and Hattiangadi, "The Open Future, Bivalence and Assertion" (2013)  
Bernstein, "Nowhere Man: Time Travel and Spatial Location" (2015)
- Nov 6 Paul, "Temporal Experience" (2010)  
Sullivan, "Problems for Temporary Existence in Tense Logic" (2012)  
Sullivan, "Change We Can Believe In (and Assert)" (2014)

- 13 *No class (Monday schedule)*
- 20 Frischhut, "What Experience Cannot Teach Us About Time" (2013)  
Briggs and Forbes, "The Growing-Block: Just One Thing After Another?" (2017)  
Miller, "The Cresting Wave: A New Moving Spotlight Theory" (2019)
- 27 *No class (Thanksgiving)*
- Dec 4 Emery, "Actualism Without Presentism? Not by way of the Relativity Objection"  
(2018)  
Emery, "Actualism, Presentism and the Grounding Objection" (2018)
- 11 Markosian, "Time and Persistence" (2019)
- 18 **Final papers due**