

Philosophy 741

Seminar in Metaphysics

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Course Overview

This seminar will consist of an examination of some of the main issues in the philosophy of time, focusing primarily on such central topics as McTaggart's argument, the rate of passage argument, four-dimensionalism, three-dimensionalism, the possibility of time without change, presentism, eternalism, the growing block theory, time travel, the open future, the moving spotlight theory, connections between presentism and actualism, the dynamic theory of time, and the static theory of time. Students should come away from the course with a good understanding of the most important issues in the philosophy of time (and with some views of their own on those issues).

Course Requirements

- ❖ **Two short (10-minute) class presentations** (collectively worth 25% of final grade).
- ❖ **Ten weekly papers** (collectively worth 35% of final grade).
- ❖ **One term paper** (worth 40% of final grade).

About Presentations

Each of your presentations should be about 10 minutes long, and should feature a 1-page handout. You are not expected to summarize the reading. Instead, you should select one main point or argument from the reading (ideally this will be one of the two or three most important things in the reading), and present your own response to that point or argument. After your presentation you will conduct a 10-minute Q&A session.

Our schedule for presentations will be worked out on the first day of class.

About Weekly Papers

For each day when there is a reading assignment and you are not giving a presentation (there will be 10 days like that), you will be required to turn in a weekly paper on that day's readings. A weekly paper is a (roughly) 5-page paper in which you do the following for each article we will be discussing that day: (i) summarize the main content of that article, (ii) raise some substantive question or questions about that content, and (iii) articulate your own solution to the main philosophical problem addressed in that article. (You should devote about two pages to each article assigned.)

Your lowest weekly paper grade will be dropped, and the remaining nine grades will be averaged to determine your overall weekly paper grade.

Weekly papers are due at noon on the day of a given reading assignment, and must be submitted using Turnitin on Moodle. Late papers will be penalized 10 points (out of 100) per day. Extensions may be granted, but only to students who arrange them with me ahead of time.

About Term Papers

Your term paper must be on an approved topic, and should be approximately 5,000-6,000 words (15-18 pages) long. It must be submitted using Turnitin on Moodle. Late papers will be penalized at the rate of one letter grade per day, but extensions are available to those who request them ahead of time.

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.
- ❖ 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, "The Dynamic Theory of Time and Time Travel to the Past," *Disputatio* **Vol. XII**, No. 57 (2020), pp. 137-165.
- ❖ Markosian, Ned, "Five New Arguments for The Dynamic Theory of Time," *Philosophical Perspectives* (forthcoming).
- ❖ 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

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| Sep | 7 | Course intro |
| | 14 | McTaggart, "Time" (1927)
Smart, "The River of Time" (1949) |
| | 21 | Quine, "Identity, Ostension, and Hypostasis" (1950)
Williams, "The Myth of Passage" (1951)
Prior, "Thank Goodness That's Over" (1959) |
| | 28 | Prior, "Changes in Events and Changes in Things" (1968)
Shoemaker, "Time Without Change" (1969) |

- Oct 5 Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (1976)
Price, "Identity Through Time" (1977)
Thomson, "Parthood and Identity Across Time" (1983)
- 12 Smith, "Problems with the New Tenseless Theory of Time" (1987)
Beer, "Temporal Indexicals and the Passage of Time" (1988)
- 19 Sider, "Four-Dimensionalism" (1997)
Hawley, "Review of Sider" (2006)
- 26 Markosian, "A Defense of Presentism" (2004)
Keller, "Presentism and Truthmaking" (2004)
- Nov 2 Miller, "Time Travel and the Open Future" (2005)
Bernstein, "Nowhere Man: Time Travel and Spatial Location" (2015)
Markosian, "The Dynamic Theory of Time and Time Travel to the Past" (2020)
- 9 Paul, "Temporal Experience" (2010)
Sullivan, "Problems for Temporary Existence in Tense Logic" (2012)
Sullivan, "Change We Can Believe In (and Assert)" (2014)
- 16 Emery, "Actualism Without Presentism? Not by way of the Relativity Objection" (2018)
Emery, "Actualism, Presentism and the Grounding Objection" (2018)
- 23 *No class (Thanksgiving)*
- 30 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)
- Dec 7 Markosian, "Five New Arguments for The Dynamic Theory of Time" (2022)
- 18 **Term papers due at 5pm**