

PHIL 180/280 Metaphysics

Time and Modality

Spring 2016

TR 10:30-11:50 160-317

Contact information

Jenn Wang

E-mail: jw997@stanford.edu

Office hours: 90-92K, T 2-4pm & by appointment

Discussion section: 240-202, W 2:30-3:20pm

Nick DiBella

E-mail: dibella@stanford.edu

Office hours: 100-102K, R 12:30-2pm & by appointment

Discussion section: 160-314, T 4:30-5:20pm

Course description

This course is a survey of the philosophy of time and modality, as organized around the following central issue. There are two competing ways to think about time. On one conception, time is space-like. Just as space consists in a three-dimensional spatial manifold, time forms a one-dimensional temporal manifold. On another conception, time is modality-like, and should be understood on analogy with notions like possibility and necessity. Topics covered include the nature of time, time's passage, spacetime and relativity, modal realism, actualism, and iterated modalities. Although modal logic and temporal logic will be introduced in the class, an independent background in logic is crucial.

Prerequisites

This course requires the skill to read, critically assess, discuss, and write about the arguments presented in course readings. As such, prerequisites include PHIL 80 and PHIL 49/50 (or higher), or permission of the instructor.

Course requirements

- (i) Reponse paper: All students are asked to submit a response paper to an argumentative passage from the reading (no more than 1,000 words) due April 14. This consists of clearly and charitably reconstructing the argument and then assessing one aspect of it.
- (ii) Undergraduates have the option of (i) submitting two short papers (about 2,500 words) due May 10 and June 5, or (ii) submitting a longer paper (about 6,000 words) due June 5.

- (iii) Graduates students should submit a longer paper due June 5. Each graduate student will also give a 30-minute presentation in class on some aspect of the reading, to be arranged with the instructor.

Resources

The main readings will be uploaded on Canvas:

<https://canvas.stanford.edu>

The following book is recommended, but not required:

Alyssa Ney, *Metaphysics: An Introduction*

On writing philosophy papers

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

These are notes that philosopher Jim Pryor wrote for his own students, but they apply more generally.

http://prezi.com/z4h1_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/

This is a sample paper that philosopher Angela Mendelovici marked up to illustrate the structure of a good paper. Not every paper will have this structure, but for a short paper, it is an excellent example.

Other

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (plato.stanford.edu)

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (www.iep.utm.edu)

PhilPapers (philpapers.org)

Wireless Philosophy (www.wi-phi.com)

Disability accommodation

Students who have a disability that may require an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). The OAE will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the OAE as soon as possible: timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The OAE's contact details are as follows.

Address: 563 Salvatierra Walk, Stanford, CA 94305

Phone: (650) 723-1066

Web address: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oe>

Honor code and plagiarism policy

Students are not merely bound by Stanford University's Honor Code. It is also their responsibility to know what the Honor Code states. Students unfamiliar with the Honor Code should consult the following site:

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/guiding/honorcode.htm>

Students are also responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism. If you are unsure about what counts as plagiarism, ask the instructor.

Schedule of readings

March 29

First day of class, no reading

March 31

Topic: Basic concepts in the philosophy of time

Reading: Dean Zimmerman, "The Privileged Present: Defending an A-Theory of Time"

April 5

Topic: Persistence through time

Reading: Sally Haslanger, "Persistence Through Time"

April 7

Topic: Time's passage I

Reading: D.C. Williams, "The Myth of Passage"; Tim Maudlin, "On the Passing of Time" (§1-4)

April 12

Topic: Time's passage II

Reading: Huw Price, "The Flow of Time" (excerpt)

April 14

Topic: Relationism vs substantivalism

Reading: The Leibniz-Clarke correspondence (Lz.3 §4-6, Lz.4 §13, Cl.4 §13); Lawrence Sklar, "Absolute Motion and Substantival Spacetime" (sections A-C)

April 19

Topic: Special relativity I

Reading: Tim Maudlin, "Special Relativity"; Katherine Hawley, "Metaphysics and Relativity"

April 21

Topic: Special relativity II

Reading: Yuri Balashov, "Enduring and Perduring Objects in Minkowski Space-Time";
Kristie Miller, "Enduring Special Relativity"

April 26

Topic: Basic concepts in the philosophy of modality

Reading: Alvin Plantinga, "Modalities: Basic Concepts and Distinctions"

April 28

Topic: Modal realism

Reading: David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (sections 1.1-1.3, 1.6-1.9)

May 3

Topic: Actualism

Reading: Alvin Plantinga, "Actualism and Possible Worlds"

May 5

Topic: Iterated modalities

Reading: Alan McMichael, "A Problem for Actualism About Possible Worlds"

May 10

Topic: Actualism and modal logic I

Reading: Bernard Linsky and Ed Zalta, "In Defense of the Simplest Quantified Modal Logic"

May 12

Topic: Actualism and modal logic II

Reading: Karen Bennett, "Proxy" Actualism

May 17

Topic: Ersatzism about times

Reading: Ulrich Meyer, *The Nature of Time* (Ch.6-7)

May 19

Topic: A-theory and tense logic

Reading: Meghan Sullivan, "Problems for Temporary Existence in Tense Logic"; Arthur Prior, *Past, Present, and Future* (Ch.8)

May 24

Topic: Temporaryism and permanentism

Reading: Meghan Sullivan, "The Minimal A-Theory"

May 26

Topic: The future

Reading: Rachael Briggs and Graeme A. Forbes, "The Real Truth About the Unreal Future"

May 31

Topic and reading TBA