



# Time Travel

Sara Bernstein

T 12:30-3:15 Malloy 220

This course will cover topics on time travel ranging from the classic to the cutting edge, including the possibility and coherence of time travel, metaphysical models of time travel, closed time-like curves, causal loops, practical problems with time travel, and requirements for the survival of time travelers. Readings will be primarily in philosophy, though time travel in literature and in movies will be frequently examined. The course will also include general topics in the metaphysics of time related to time travel, including the nature of temporal passage, the direction of time, the existence and nature of the objective present, and analogies between the merely possible and the past and future.

## Assessment:

- 30% in-class participation
- 10% in-class presentation on a reading or a topic related to the reading
- 10% in-class presentation on paper topic
- 50% final paper

All readings and some other cool resources will be posted on Sakai.

## Schedule

### August 21: **Introduction to Time Travel; What Counts as Time Travel?**

- "Chronoportative Taxonomy" (excerpt from The Philosophy of Time Travel, Nikk Effingham (ms))
- "Introduction" (excerpt from Paradoxes of Time Travel, Ryan Wasserman)

### August 28: **The Metaphysics of Time**

- "Time" (excerpt from *Introduction to Metaphysics*), Alyssa Ney\*
- "Presentism, Eternalism, and the Growing Block", Kristie Miller\*
- "Time" (SEP Entry, sections 4-7), Ned Markosian\*\*

\* Do these readings if you do not have background in the metaphysics of time.

\*\* Do this reading if you already have background in the metaphysics of time.

#### September 4: **Models of Time Travel I: Eternalism**

- "The Paradoxes of Time Travel", David Lewis
- "Traveling in A and B Time", Ted Sider

#### September 11: **Models of Time Travel II: Presentism and Growing Block**

- "Changing the Past", Peter van Inwagen
- "Time Travel and the Movable Present", Sara Bernstein

#### September 18: **Models of Time Travel: Branching**

- "An Unwelcome Consequence of the Multiverse Thesis", Nikk Effingham
- "On Using the Multiverse to Avoid the Paradoxes of Time Travel", John Abbruzzese

#### September 25: **Paradoxes I: The Grandfather Paradox and its Variants**

- "A New Grandfather Paradox", Ted Sider
- "What Time Travelers Cannot Do", Kadri Vihvelin

#### October 2: **Paradoxes II: Causal Paradoxes**

- "Causal Paradoxes" (excerpt from Paradoxes of Time Travel, Ryan Wasserman)
- "The Bootstrap Paradox" (excerpt from The Philosophy of Time Travel, Nikk Effingham (ms))
- Short story: "A Little Something for Us Tempunauts", Philip K. Dick

Recommended but optional TV episode: Doctor Who, *Blink* (2007)

#### October 9: **Practicalities of Time Travel**

- "Nowhere Man: Time Travel and Spatial Location", Sara Bernstein
- Time Machines, Paul Nahin, pp. 13-30, 40-43

#### October 23: **Time Travel and the Metaphysics of Objects**

- "A Mereological Challenge for Endurantism", Nikk Effingham
- "Mereology and Multi-Visitation" (from Chapter 6 of Paradoxes of Time Travel, Ryan Wasserman)

#### October 30: **Temporal/ Modal Analogies and Time Travel**

- "Modal Persistence and Modal Travel", Kristie Miller and Michael Duncan
- "The Lump Sum: A Theory of Modal Parts", Meg Wallace

### November 6: **Time Travel and Personal Identity**

- "Fission may Kill You (But Not for the Reasons You Thought)", Heather Demarest
- "Paradoxes of Identity" (from Paradoxes of Time Travel, Ryan Wasserman)

### November 13: **Time Travel and Death**

- "Eternalism and Death's Badness", Ben Bradley
- "The Metaphysics of Mortals: Death, Immortality, and Personal Time", Cody Gilmore

### November 20: **Time Travel and Free Will**

- "Things Mere Mortals Can Do, But Philosophers Can't", Stephanie Rennick
- "Time Travelers are not Free", Michael Rea

### November 27: **Ethics of Time Travel**

- "Ethical Puzzles of Time Travel", Sara Bernstein
- "The Ethics of Killing Baby Hitler", Matt Ford
- Optional: "Heroes and the Ethics of Time Travel: Does the Present Matter?", David Faraci
- Recommended but optional TV: *Misfits*, Season Three, Episode Four

### December 4: **Final Project Presentations and Review**

A few notes concerning...

#### Class Participation

Philosophical skill is best acquired by *doing philosophy* rather than passively learning about it. Active participation in class, which includes asking questions, coming up with cool and/ or silly examples, asking for clarification on confusing concepts, and/ or presenting an informed opinion about the reading, is central to learning to do philosophy. Talking once per class will be enough to do well in class participation.

#### Philosophical "Bedside Manner"

Academic philosophy has a reputation as a blood sport. It need not be so. We're all in the Truth Trenches together. Philosophical interaction can be friendly and collaborative while still being constructive and rigorous. Please contribute to class in ways that aim at discovering the truth rather than establishing intellectual dominance.

#### Syllabus Changes

It is possible that topics will be added, removed, or changed on the syllabus. If this happens, it will be announced in class and over email.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is representing another person's work as one's own. Outside works must be clearly cited or placed in quotes. Any cheating will be handled according to the university's policy on academic dishonesty. Please see the Honor Code for more information.

### Ways to Reach Sara

Email: [sbernste@nd.edu](mailto:sbernste@nd.edu)

Office Hours: by appointment.