

January 6, 2016

HON 202-1 (3289), 3 credits, Spring 2015, TBD.

Time

Dr. Scott O'Connor

<http://scoconno.github.io/Teaching/Time>

1/19/2015–5/2/2015

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Course Description

We are temporal creatures. We structure our lives around a sense of our history, of what we were in the past, and what we hope to be in the future. Our societies are also essentially temporal. Political, economic, and cultural institutions value certain units of time over others. Work weeks must not exceed a certain length. Elections must happen on certain fixed dates. The measuring of time is both essential to us and the societies we live in. But what exactly is it that we are measuring?

In this course, we will examine the nature of time and the role it plays in our lives and societies more generally. We begin by discussing the history of time-measurement and various struggles peoples have encountered in measuring it. From there we move to discuss how these struggles have shaped, often profoundly, the development of different societies and cultures. Next we will discuss time and the person specifically focusing on two questions. The first is how we could survive as the same person as we change over time. The second is how we perceive and understand time. If we want to understand the importance of time to us and our societies, we need to know what it is. To discuss

this, we'll look at two distinct questions. The first is the nature of temporal passage and arguments that suggest that both it and time may, in fact, not exist at all. The second is about the direction of time. Why is it that time unfolds in the particular direction that it does? Could it flow backwards? We'll conclude by thinking about the future prospects of time. In particular, we will look at the possibility of time-travel and how its advent might radically re-shape our conceptions of ourselves and the societies we live in.

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to (i) find the argument of a text and clearly restate it, (ii) clearly and charitably explain viewpoints that are not their own, (iii) think critically, (iv) write well-structured prose in which they clearly state a thesis and persuasively defend it, (v) demonstrate a substantive grasp of how time is an important topic of study in several distinct disciplines.

Required Textbook

Available in the campus book store and online retailers. All other readings will be distributed on the course website.

- Robin LePoidevin, 'Travels in Four-Dimensions: The Enigmas of Space and Time', OUP, 2005 (TRAVELS)

Optional

Course Website

There is both a Blackboard site and website for this course (link on first page). Clicking the first link on the left panel within the Blackboard site will bring you to the course website. All assignments will be submitted through Blackboard. Readings, notes, etc. will be posted on the course website. Note that Blackboard difficulties are rare and automatically reported to instructors. Under no circumstance will a student's report of a Blackboard difficulty be reason for an extension. It is your responsibility to contact Blackboard support for help.

Requirements

- *Workload*: Expect to spend an average of 5–6 hours per week completing the readings and assignments.
- *Attendance*: Roll call will be taken. 0.5 point will be awarded per class up to a maximum of 10 points. Points will not be awarded during weeks 1 & 2.
- *Reading*: You are required to prepare the assigned readings before class. This will be determined through discussion, pop quizzes, and reading responses. You begin with 10 points. You lose 2 points for every class you come to unprepared. No extra credit will be offered to make up lost points in this category.

- *Short essays* submitted through Blackboard. 300–500 words long. 4 will be assigned. You must complete 2. At least 1 must be completed before the mid-term break. If you complete more than 2, the lowest grades will be dropped.
- *Long essay* submitted through Blackboard. 1000–1500 words long. 2 will be assigned. You must complete 1. If you complete more than 1, the lowest grade will be dropped.
- *1 final project* comprising a proposal, short presentation, and written submission.
- *Grade Distribution:* Attendance–0.5 point per class (10 total); Reading–10 points; 2 short Essays—10 points each (20 total); 1 long essay–20 points; 1 final project–10 points for the proposal, 10 points for the presentation, 20 points for the final submission (40 points total).
- *Grade Breakdown:*

96–100	A		77–79	C+
90–95	A-		73–76	C
87–89	B+		70–72	C-
83–86	B		60–69	D
80–82	B -		0–59	F

Policies

- **Student Responsibility:** This syllabus outlines the required text, assignments, requirements, and policies for this course. By taking this course, you agree to read this syllabus and be bound by those requirements and policies.
- *Academic Integrity:* All the work you turn in (including papers, drafts, and discussion board posts) must be written by you specifically for this course. It must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Being a student at NJCU requires you to follow [NJCU's Academic Integrity Policy](#). Penalties for violations are as follows: 1st infraction will result in a 0 for the assignment. 2nd infraction will result in a 0 for the entire course & application for permanent record on student's transcript. (Repeated violations can lead to expulsion from NJCU).
- *Attendance:* You are considered absent if you are (i) not present during roll call, (ii) leave early, (iii) leave without permission, or (iv) leave for an extended period of time. No excuses. No exceptions.
- *Communication:* To comply with Federal Privacy Laws (FERPA) and NJCU policies, all communication will be through Blackboard and/or official NJCU e-mail. Check both your NJCU e-mail and Blackboard daily. For further information see <http://scoconno.github.io/Contact/>.
- *Conduct:* Distracting and disrespectful behaviors, including but not limited to eating, leaving your seat, talking out of turn, and aggression are prohibited. Penalties

include, but are not limited to, a loss of attendance points for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.

- *Electronic devices:* Use of electronic device, including, but not limited, to smart-phones, dictaphones, tablets, and laptops, is prohibited. Recording a lecture is in violation of Copyright. Penalties include, but are not limited to, a loss of attendance points for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.
- *Format for Written Work:* Submit work to Blackboard either as a rich text or Microsoft Word file. All work must be typed. Your papers should be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with margins set to one inch on all sides. If hard copies are requested, please staple or paperclip copies of papers and drafts.
- *Grading:* Grades will be available within 1 week of an assignment being submitted. See: <http://scoconno.github.io/Teaching/Grading> for further information.
- *Late work & Make-up Policy:* See the assignment schedule below. No make-ups or late work accepted under any circumstances. No exceptions. But note that there are 110 points available with 96+ being required for an A.
- *Statement for students with disabilities:* If you are a student with a disability and wish to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, please register with the Office of Specialized Services and Supplemental Instruction (OSS/SI). To begin this process, complete the registration form available on the OSS/SI website at www.njcu.edu/Specialized_Services.aspx (listed under Student Resources-Forms). Contact OSS/SI at 201-200-2091 or visit the office in Karnoutsos Hall, Room 102 for additional information.

Weekly Course Schedule

Dates refer to the first day of the week. Complete the readings before the first class of the week. Readings marked with a ‘**’ can be found on the course website. Handouts can be found on the course website. All other listed readings can be found in the required textbook. Changes to the syllabus will be announced in class and *via* your NJCU email address.

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Struggling with time

1. ‘Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,’ E.P. Thompson
2. ‘Old Time and Ancient Chronometers,’ Tony Roark

Week 3: What do clocks measure?

1. TRAVELS, Ch. 1
2. ‘Mind, the Metric, and Conventionality,’ Bradley Dowden

Week 4: Time and Change

1. TRAVELS, Ch. 2
2. 'Time Without Change,' Sydney Shoemaker

Week 5: Does time have a beginning? (no class on Mon.)

1. TRAVELS Ch 5

Week 6: Does Time Pass?

1. 'Slaughterhouse-Five,' Kurt Vonnegut (extracts)
2. TRAVELS, Ch. 8

Week 7: Our perception of time

1. TBD
2. 'Confessions' (extracts), St. Augustine
3. 'The Principles of Psychology' (extracts), William James

Spring Break**Week 8:** Does the future exist? (Zeno's paradoxes, eternalism, etc.)

1. TRAVELS, Ch. 9

Week 9: Free-Will

1. TBD

Week 10: How do we survive time?

1. TBD

Week 11: Solutions

1. TBD

Week 12: Time-Travel

1. 'All You Zombies,' by Robert Heinlein
2. TRAVELS, Ch. 10
3. Lewis and the paradoxes of time travel

Week 13: The future of time-travel

1. Interstellar (movie)
2. TBD

Week 14: Presentations**Week 15:** Presentations

Assignment Schedule

Dates refer to the due date. All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard by 1:00pm. No late work accepted. No exceptions. You must complete 2 short essays and 1 long essay. If you complete more than the required number, the lowest grades will be dropped.

1. 02/01/2016, Short essay 1
2. 02/15/2016, Short essay 2
3. 02/29/2016, Long essay 1
4. 03/21/2016, Short essay 3
5. 03/28/2016, Final Project: Proposal
6. 04/11/2016, Long essay 2
7. 04/25/2016, Short essay 4
8. 5/06/2016, Final project: Written submission.