

Philosophy of Time Travel

PHIL 3012: class # 18174

Credit: 3 Units

Instructor: Dr. Chapman Waters

Office: CTIHB 247

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 3:00 - 5:00pm or by appointment

Email: chapman.waters@utah.edu

Class Location: BU C 211

Class Time: MWF 9:40 - 10:30am

Prerequisites: none

Course Description

This course will explore the possibility and coherence of time travel, what modern physics has to say about time travel, metaphysical models of time travel, causal loops, the paradoxes of time travel, as well as practical and ethical problems associated with time travel. In addition to reading relevant philosophical literature, we will examine issues to do with time travel via popular fiction -- short stories, films, or television.

Texts

All readings will be available on the course Canvas page, in Perusall, or through the Marriot Library's webpage.

Grading

Grades will be given on a 0-100 point grading scale:

100-93:	A
92-90:	A-
89-87:	B+
86-83:	B
82-80:	B-
79-77:	C+
76-73:	C
72-70:	C-
69-60:	D
59-0:	E/F

Final grades will be determined by the following:

20%	Accountability Tasks
20%	Reading Discussions in Perusall
20%	Short Writing Assignments
20%	Canvas Quizzes
20%	Comprehensive Final Exam

ACCOUNTABILITY TASKS

There will be between 5 and 20 accountability tasks assigned over the course of the semester. These will take various forms, including (but not limited to) taking attendance, short pop-quizzes, group-work, in-class debates, short-reflection pieces on that day's reading, among other things. What accountability tasks have in common is that they will be given during class-meetings and students will not know on which days they will be administered. Moreover, it's possible that more than one accountability task will be assigned during a single class period. These assignments will not be overly difficult. I suspect that most students who come to class prepared will be able to earn most of the points on any given task. The goal of these assignments is to motivate students to attend class and to come to class prepared.

READING DISCUSSIONS IN PERUSALL

Perusall is a "social reading platform" available to students via Canvas. It allows students to digitally annotate readings (with text, links, and embedded content). For most of the short stories we read this semester, students will be required to interact with each other about the text before it is discussed in class. The expectation is that students will — against the backdrop of things they've learned in class — apply philosophical analysis to time travel narratives — e.g., by asking questions about what they are confused about, answering/speculating on answers to questions from other students, giving arguments/explanations about what time/time-travel is like within a narrative, or whether a story is logically and/or physically possible, identifying/analyzing any paradoxes which arise within a story, providing potential resolutions to paradoxes which arise, posting relevant links, drawing parallels, identifying implicit assumptions, and similar things. The goal is to make the process of figuring out what's happening in these narratives one that is collaborative, engaging, and (hopefully) fun. Students may also be required to engage with a few philosophical texts in a similar fashion. There will likely be between 7 to 9 of these assignments offered this semester — depending upon how fast we move. *Only those five with the highest scores will count toward your final grade. It is your responsibility to ensure that you've engaged with at least five different discussions by the end of the semester.* For more information about Perusall and these assignments, see the appropriate document on the Canvas course homepage posted under "IMPORTANT CLASS LINKS."

SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (SWAs)

For each SWA students will be provided with a writing prompt or "essay question." Responses must be thorough but concise — at most 1.5 to 2 pages, single-spaced. There will be 4 SWAs, but only those 2 with the highest scores will count toward your final grade. Detailed instructions for each SWA will be provided to you on Canvas a reasonable amount of time before they are due.

Note on SWAs: These are hard assignments. You are encouraged to consult with me about SWAs — either before you turn them in or after. I'm happy to read drafts, give feedback, tips, etc., to help you succeed. This is especially recommended to students who have had little or no previous experience writing philosophy papers. There will also be a "page" on the Canvas course website with links to helpful resources for writing SWAs and other philosophy papers.

CANVAS QUIZZES

There will be 5 quizzes administered and turned in through the Canvas course webpage this semester. You must complete all 5 quizzes. Typically, quizzes will contain multiple choice questions which can only be answered if the student has done the reading for the relevant

class session and/or attended recent lectures. Take note: each quiz will have a due date and a “time window” in which it is to be completed — usually 24 or 48 hours (this is the only time constraint for these assignments). You will *not* be permitted to complete a quiz after its due date has passed. *It is your responsibility to ensure that you complete each quiz before the time at which it is due. Again, you are required to complete **each** and **every** quiz that is administered through Canvas.*

CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM

The final exam will consist of multiple choice questions similar to those encountered on quizzes and one essay question similar to those found on the Short Writing Assignment prompts. Unless specified otherwise, the exam will be paper based (scantron for multiple choice questions and the essay portion will be hand-written) and held in our regular classroom. A study guide will be posted on Canvas which will be routinely updated throughout the semester.

Course Policies

Class Meetings — According to the University’s stipulations, this qualifies as an “in-person” course. In the absence of further developments relating to the evolving COVID-19 crisis, we will plan on meeting in-person at our regularly scheduled times. In-person classes will not be recorded nor will students have the option to attend class via online modalities. However, if you need to seek an ADA accommodation to request an exception to this policy due to a disability, please contact the Center for Disability and Access (CDA). CDA will work with us to determine what, if any, ADA accommodations are reasonable and appropriate. Students who become quarantined due to a COVID-19 infection will receive accommodations on a case by case basis, provided that they are in contact with me about the situation in a timely manner.

Covid-19 Vaccinations — I *strongly* encourage any students who are currently unvaccinated to get vaccinated as soon as possible. While Utah law prohibits state universities from requiring COVID-19 vaccinations, it is highly effective in preventing severe COVID-19 symptoms, hospitalization, and death from coronavirus. Vaccinations are available to everyone 12 years and older. Appointments are open in the U of U Health system for patients as well as additional vaccine providers throughout Utah. For up-to-date campus vaccination information go to: <https://alert.utah.edu/covid/vaccine/>

Self-Reporting — Students *must* self-report if they test positive for COVID-19 via <https://coronavirus.utah.edu/> Students are encouraged to take advantage of university COVID-19 testing services: <https://alert.utah.edu/covid-19-testing/>. Voluntary asymptomatic testing will continue to be available weekly for all members of the campus community.

Face Masks — We will wear them if we have to. *According to the CDC, wearing a mask remains an effective means of preventing infection for both unvaccinated and vaccinated people. Regardless of what someone chooses (mask or no mask), the university seeks to foster a sense of community and asks everyone on campus to be respectful of individual decisions on mask wearing.*

Canvas — The Canvas course webpage is your contact point for this course, and so, it’s important that you familiarize yourself with it (for a tutorial page, visit the link pasted below). The “homepage” will provide a detailed course schedule that will be updated as we go. I will also use the Canvas homepage to distribute all course materials (course schedule, readings, handouts, study guides, etc.). Moreover, all coursework will be turned in through Canvas.

Canvas Tutorial: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>

Attendance — Officially, I don't take it. But trust me when I say it is in your best interest to attend class regularly. A lack of attendance *will* be reflected in your final grade. If you have to show up late to class, that's fine. Come in when you can, but please do so quietly. It's better you show up late than miss an entire class.

Coursework Deadlines: In the absence of justifiable prior arrangements or cases of serious, unexpected and documented medical emergencies or bereavement, coursework must be turned in as scheduled. For circumstances that are not emergencies, students must send the instructor a request for an accommodation; this request should be sent a sufficient amount of time *before* the officially scheduled due date for the student to learn whether the excuse is acceptable. Requests sent after an assignment's deadline has passed will not be considered.

Academic Integrity: You are expected to do your own work on all assignments. The *minimum* penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a failing grade in the course. You will also be reported to the University's Academic Misconduct Committee. Students are responsible for knowing and understanding the University's policy on academic misconduct. For further information about this, consult the following website:

<https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>.

Course Schedule

Below, I've provided a general outline of the course schedule. However: *this syllabus is NOT a binding legal contract*. I reserve the right to revise this schedule (including due dates for assignments) as I see fit. For any changes that are made, they will be reflected in the official "Course Schedule" on the CANVAS course page.

Weeks 1 - 4:

Topics:

Intro to Time Travel
Intro to the Metaphysics of Time
Models of Time Travel: Eternalism
Models of Time Travel: Presentism & The Growing Block

Weeks 5 - 9:

Topics:

Can Time Travelers Change the Past?
Paradoxes: Loops & Causation
Modern Science and Time Travel: Relativity
Modern Science and Time Travel: Branching Universes and Quantum Mechanics

Weeks 10 - 16:

Topics:

Time Travel and Free Will
 Time Travel and Personal Identity
 Time Travel and the Metaphysics of Objects
 Practical/Ethical Problem for Time Travel
 Backwards Time
 Other Topics: TBD

Finals Week: 12/11 – 12/15

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, December 14, 8:00 - 10:00am in our regular classroom (unless specified otherwise).

Additional Policies and Resources**Veterans Center**

If you are a **student veteran**, I want you to know that the U of Utah has a Veterans Support Center on campus. They are located in Room 161 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events and links to outside resources: <http://veteranscenter.utah.edu/>. Please also let me know if you need any additional support in this class for any reason.

LGBT Resource Center

If you are a member of the **LGBTQ community**, I want you to know that my classroom is a safe zone*. Additionally, please know that the U of Utah has an LGBT Resource Center on campus. They are located in Room 409 in the Oplin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. You can visit their website to find more information about the support they can offer, a list of events through the center and links to additional resources: <http://lgbt.utah.edu/>. Please also let me know if there is any additional support you need in this class.

Learners of English as an Additional/Second Language

If you are an English language learner, please be aware of several resources on campus that will support you with your language development and writing. These resources include: the Department of Linguistics ESL Program (<http://linguistics.utah.edu/esl-program/>); the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.utah.edu/>); the Writing Program (<http://writing-program.utah.edu/>); the English Language Institute (<http://continue.utah.edu/eli/>). Please let me know if there is any additional support you would like to discuss for this class.

ADA

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Nondiscrimination

The University of Utah does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information or protected veteran's status, in employment, treatment, admission, access to educational programs and activities, or other University benefits or services. Inquiries

concerning perceived discrimination or requests for disability accommodations may be referred to the University's Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801- 581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066.

Sexual Misconduct/Title XI

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801- 581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585- 2677(COPS).

Wellness Statement

Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801-581-7776.

University Safety Statement.

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

Philosophy Resources: (helpful for research and getting a better handle on complex issues)

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>