

Graduate Seminar- Time in Metaphysics and Logic
Notre Dame Spring 2012
5-7:30 W, O'Shag 345

INSTRUCTOR: Meghan Sullivan
OFFICE HOURS: I am usually in my office (217 Malloy) on Monday and Tuesday, 2-3pm. But I am happy to set up any meeting by appointment. Indeed, I prefer if you send me a quick note before you come in (even the same day).
CONTACT: Sullivan.meghan@gmail.com (preferred)

COURSE GOALS:

How should we reason about the past and future? Are they just like other regions of space? Are they like possible worlds? Is the future importantly different from the past? Is there a clear and precise sense in which the future is open?

And how should we reason about change? Do objects come into and out of existence? Or do they eternally exist, as the spatial model of time suggests? Can abstract objects like propositions change? Do entire regions of spacetime undergo change?

In this course we will look in detail at some contemporary debates over time and change. The focus of the course will be a bedeviling problem about expressing change in existence over time. The first half of the class will be largely foundational. We'll try to rigorously define the difference between A-theories and B-theories of time. We'll consider different attempts to state these theories in logical formalisms, in particular attempts to describe change in existence. We'll weigh arguments for and against various philosophical views about change in existence.

In the second half of this course, we'll consider ways in which this debate over time and change impinges on other branches on philosophy. I'm particularly interested in the metaphysics of creation and death, the "openness" of the future, and issues that motivate relativism in philosophy of language.

NOTE: I don't presuppose any particular background in logic beyond the undergraduate introductory level and a willingness to learn. And I will hold a few optional "formal bootcamp" sessions for those who need extra practice. One of my auxiliary goals in this class is to raise our collective logic literacy, so we can understand and criticize arguments in metaphysics that make use of formalism.

REQUIREMENTS:

To succeed you must consistently attend the seminar, thoroughly understand key concepts, effectively use logical tools to analyze arguments and (most important) write clear, persuasive and philosophically sophisticated essays. The assignments

in this course are designed to help you hone skills that you'll continue to use in professional contexts. For students taking the seminar for a grade: your grade for the course will be based on the following components:

20% In-Class Conference Commentaries: Each student must give a 7-10 minute conference-style commentary. You will be assigned a paper from the class. You will succinctly explain the main argument and key principles of the paper, raise objections and pose issues for discussion. You will also provide a handout for your commentary. The commentary should be very similar in quality to the kind of comments you'd be asked to give at a professional conference. You should focus on accuracy, informativeness, and ability to stick to the time constraints. I am happy to preview your commentary in office hours before the live event. I will give you feedback afterward, and I encourage seminar participants to help each other become better at public presentations.

20% Problem Sets: There two short tense/modal logic problem sets. Each is worth 10% of your grade. You may discuss the problems with other students, but the work you submit must be your own. The main purpose of the problem sets is to build your fluency in systems that are used in some of the readings. I will hold optional "bootcamp" sessions to help you with the skills for these problems.

10% Participation: The success of this seminar depends crucially on in-seminar discussion. You are expected to attend every session, ask interesting questions, help others understand the material, and provide interesting and helpful criticism of articles and of other students' proposals.

50% Seminar Paper: You will write a 15-30 page, double-spaced, original paper on some topic related to the seminar. It will be clearly written, cogently argued, and philosophically sophisticated. You will have opportunities to get lots of feedback and edit the paper before the end of the seminar. I expect you to select a topic and begin the project early in the semester. The final paper is due at the start of the exam period, but I'll also set some intermediate benchmark deadlines. I'm a huge proponent of the "write early/edit often" approach to philosophical research.

CLASS ETIQUETTE AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

I expect you to behave ethically, at least as pertains to matters in this class. This means being prepared, asking questions, responding effectively to other students' questions, and raising issues. Everyone is expected to treat others critically but—first and foremost—respectfully. Further, I take academic integrity and the Notre Dame Honor policy very seriously. Papers and problem sets must represent your own, original work. Cheating, plagiarism or serious violations of the etiquette policy in this course will be reported to the DGS. If you have any questions about this policy or acceptable collaboration with other students, please contact me.

TEXTBOOKS:

There won't be a textbook for this class, as we'll be focusing on contemporary articles. But you might pick up Sider's [Four-Dimensionalism](#) or Haslanger and Kurtz's [Persistence: Contemporary Readings](#). Each contain helpful (and accessible!) background for the metaphysics we are discussing. The Sider book is available free online through the Hesburgh library. If you want additional background for the logic, I recommend Sider's [Logic for Philosophy](#). Or Hughes and Cresswell's [New Introduction to Modal Logic](#). Some of the problems we'll work in class will be based on exercises in these books.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Below is a tentative schedule for the seminar. Readings will be posted on Concourse, and they should be done before each assigned seminar. The order and lineup will very likely change somewhat depending on our interests. Starred articles are eligible for presentation and, on the whole, are more important for our discussion that day than the other articles. As the semester progresses, I'll also try to provide recommendations for outside readings, and I encourage you to contact me about further reading for your paper topics.

Date	Topic	Assigned Readings	Other Assignments
18-Jan	A-Theories, B-Theories, and Two Unsolved Mysteries in the Philosophy of Time	Lewis "The Problem of Temporary Intrinsics" from <i>On the Plurality of Worlds</i> , Zimmerman "Presentism and Temporary Intrinsics", and Sider <i>Four-Dimensionalism</i> Intro and Chap 1.	Problem Set 1 Assigned
25-Jan	A Bug for A-Theories: Change in Existence and Tense Logic	*Sullivan "Problems for Temporary Existence in Tense Logic" and Prior "Time and Existence" from <i>Past, Present, and Future</i> . (Use the transcribed version).	
1-Feb	Similar Problems in Ancient Metaphysics? Change in Substance in Aristotle	Special Guest: Sean Kelsey. Read <i>On Generation and Corruption</i> Book I, Kelsey "Hylomorphism in Aristotle's Physics", <i>Physics</i> I 8, and Kelsey "Aristotle Physics I 8"	

8-Feb	Contemporary Solutions. Option 1: Rewire Tense Logic?	Burgess Chap 2 "Temporal Logic", Kripke "Semantical Considerations on Modal Logic", *Bennett "Axes of Actualism"	Problem Set 1 Due/ Problem Set 2 Assigned
15-Feb	More on Option 1: Quantified Tense Logics	...continued	
22-Feb	Option 2: Adopt a Permanentist Ontology?	*Williamson "Bare Possibilia" and *"Necessary Existents"	
Feb-29	Option 3: Deflate the Debate?	*Hofweber "The Meta-Problem of Change" * Sider Chap 11 from <i>Writing Book of the World</i> , and Hirsch Chapter 5 from <i>The Concept of Identity</i> .	Problem Set 2 Due
7-Mar	Does Tense Logic Rest on a Mistake?	*Evans "Does Tense Logic Rest on a Mistake?", *Richard "Temporalism and Eternalism" and Sullivan "Change We Can Believe In (and Assert)"	
14-Mar	SPRING BREAK	Work on Paper Proposals!	
21-Mar	Is the Future Open? Branches and Relative Truth.	*MacFarlane "Future Contingents and Relative Truth" and *"Truth in the Garden of Forking Paths"	
28-Mar	Is the Future Open? Indeterminacy Operators	*Barnes and Cameron "The Open Future: Bivalence, Determinacy and Ontology." and Barnes and Williams "A Theory of Metaphysical Indeterminacy"	Paper Proposals Due
4-Apr	No Class (Pacific APA)	Work on Papers!	

11-Apr	Time Bias and Here-Nowism	*Hare "Self Bias, Time Bias, and the Metaphysics of Self and Time." and *Dougherty "On whether to prefer pain to pass."	
18-Apr	The Metaphysics and Ethics of Merely Future Existents	*Parfit <i>Reasons and Persons</i> (Ch 16: The Non-Identity Problem) and *Harman "Can We Harm and Benefit in Creating?"	Draft of Paper Due
25-Apr	The Metaphysics and Ethics of Death	*Brueckner and Fischer "Why Is Death Bad?" and *Bradley "Time and Existence"	Peer Critique Due