

# Phil 54: FYS—Thinking about Time (Time and Time Travel)

Fall 2015 Syllabus

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Class times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3.35–4.50pm  
Class location: Caldwell Hall, Room 103  
Professor: Gillian Russell  
Email: gillian\_russell@unc.edu  
Office hours: Friday 12.30–2.30pm  
Office Location: Caldwell Hall 203

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course is a First Year Seminar in the philosophy of time. We will look at philosophical puzzles and paradoxes concerning time—including some arising from the Special Theory of Relativity—while focusing on developing important philosophical skills, such as the ability to analyse, critique and create arguments, and write philosophy papers.

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## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

—*General Relativity from A to B* by Robert Geroch  
—*Einstein's Dreams* by Alan Lightman

There will be many other readings for the course. Some will be posted as electronic library reserves for this course. The others are available online and the links are in the syllabus.

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## READINGS AND TOPICS

### **Wednesday 19th August - First day of class**

No pre-assigned reading. We will look at some short passages from Aristotle and Augustine.

### **Monday 24th August—Introduction to Special Relativity**

Reading: Geroch: introduction + chapter 1 (up to page 10)

### **Wednesday 26th August**

Reading: Geroch chapter 2: the Aristotelian view.

### **Monday 31st August**

Reading: Geroch chapters 3 & 4: the Galilean view + difficulties with the Galilean view

### **Wednesday 2nd September**

Reading: Geroch Chapter 5: The Interval (n.b. this chapter is longer than the others. Our study of it will extend into the next class but it would be good to read it all for this class.)

**Monday 7th September**

No class - labor day!

**Wednesday 9th September**

No class

**Monday 14th September**

No class

**Wednesday 16th September**

No class

**Monday 21st September**

Geroch Chapter 5: The Interval. We'll also review what we've learned from *Geroch* so far.

**Wednesday 23rd September**

Geroch Chapter 6: The Physics and Geometry of the Interval

We've now read as far in Geroch as we need to for this class. But there are only two chapters left; I recommend that you read them for your own edification.

"29th May, 1905" in *Einstein's Dreams*

**Monday 28th September—Time and Existence**

"Time and Physical Geometry"—Hilary Putnam, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 64, No. 8 (Apr., 1967): pp. 240-247

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2024493>

"22nd June, 1905" in *Einstein's Dreams*

**Wednesday 30th September—Time and Freedom**

"Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"—Harry Frankfurt

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctytho/dfwCompatFrankfurt.htm>

**Monday 5th October—Time Travel**

"The Paradoxes of Time Travel"—David Lewis, *Philosophical Papers* vol. 2, Oxford University Press, Oxford (1986).

"16th April, 1905" in *Einstein's Dreams*

**Wednesday 7th October—Time Travel**

"Time Travel", Chapter 8 in *Space, Time and Philosophy*—Christopher Ray, Routledge, London, (1991). (On electronic reserve at the library.)

**Monday 12th October—Eternal Recurrence**

(It's University Day, but we still have class.)

Selections from *The Gay Science*, Frederich Nietzsche (on electronic reserve at the library.)

“14th April, 1905” in *Einstein's Dreams*

**Wednesday 14th October**

Fall break

**Monday 19th October—Identity over Time**

“The Self and the Future”—Bernard Williams

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2183946>

**Wednesday 21st October—Identity over Time**

“Personal Identity”—Derek Parfit, *Philosophical Review*, 80 (1971): pp.3–27.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2184309>

**Monday 26th October—Identity over Time**

“Survival and Identity”—David Lewis, *Philosophical Papers* vol. 1 Oxford University Press, (1983): pp.55-77. (on electronic reserves)

**Wednesday 28th October—Memory**

“The Lost Mariner”—Oliver Sacks in *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* (on electronic reserves)

“20th May, 1905” in *Einstein's Dreams*

**Monday 2nd November**

No class.

**Wednesday 4th November—Memory**

“Lost in the Mall” in *Opening Skinner's Box*—Lauren Slater (on electronic reserve)

**Monday 9th November—Memory**

“On the uses and abuses of history” in *Untimely Meditations*, Frederich Nietzsche (on electronic reserve).

**Wednesday 11th November—Immortality**

“9th June, 1905”, “11th June, 1905” and “8th May, 1905” in *Einstein's Dreams*

**Monday 16th November—Immortality**

“The Midlife Crisis” by Kieran Setiya

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3521354.0014.031>

**Wednesday 18th November—More Time Travel**

“Ethical Puzzles of Time Travel” (draft) by Sara Bernstein (on electronic reserve.)

**Monday 23rd November**

“How fast does time pass?” by Ned Markosian

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2108255>

“14th May, 1905” from *Einstein’s Dreams*

**Wednesday 25th November**

No class (thanksgiving)

**Monday 30th November**

The logic of time (no pre-assigned reading for this topic.)

**Wednesday 2nd December - last class.**

There is no additional assigned reading for the last class.

ASSESSMENT: assessment will be by way of six assignments over the course of the semester. Two will contain problems related to the material we study in Geroch. Two will be argument maps based on philosophical texts we have studied, and two will be short papers. There are no exams for this course.

Assessment	Due Date	% of Course Grade
Problem set 1	Wednesday 2nd September	10%
Problem set 2	Wednesday 30th September	20%
Argument map 1	Wednesday 7th October	10%
Argument map 2	Wednesday 28th October	20%
Paper 1 (5 pages)	Wednesday 18th November	20%
Paper 2 (5 pages)	Wednesday 2nd December	20%

Work should be turned in by placing it in my mailbox on the first floor of Caldwell Hall. Late work will have a third of a grade deducted for each 24 hours that it is late, e.g. a paper that would have received a B, but which is 49 hours late, will in fact receive a C+.

THE CENTER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACADEMIC COUNSELING: Located in the Student Academic Services Building, the CSSAC offers support to all students through units such as the Learning Center and the Writing Center.

HONOR CODE: All students must be familiar with and abide by the Honor Code, which covers issues such as plagiarism, falsification, unauthorized assistance or collaboration, cheating, and other grievous acts of academic dishonesty. Violations of the Honor Code will not be taken lightly.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY: Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact Disability Services as soon as possible to discuss accommodations.

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