Metaphysics: Time

PHI 540
Wednesdays, 1:30-4:20pm
Marx 201

Instructor
David Builes
Marx 203
dbuiles@princeton.edu

Course Description
This seminar will survey some contemporary work in the metaphysics of time. One of the goals of the seminar is to serve as an advanced introduction to the metaphysics of time, so no prior knowledge in the metaphysics of time will be assumed. In some weeks, our discussion will intersect with topics in physics, but when it does, the relevant scientific background will be introduced in a self-contained way. Each week, our discussion will be centered on one or two recent papers on a certain topic. In some weeks, I’ve also suggested optional readings that serve as either background material or follow-up material.

Assessment
If you would like to receive a unit for the class: (i) submit a first draft of a term paper, of a minimum of 3,000 words, by November 10th, and (ii) submit a final paper (~7,000-12,000 words) by December 14th. Students from other departments who need a grade should talk to me.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1: Truthmaking and The A-theory
The Truth About the Past and the Future - Markosian (2013)
   Optional Further Reading: A Defence of Lucretian Presentism - Tallant and Ingram (2020)

Week 2: Relativity and The A-theory
Why Special Relativity is a Problem for the A-theory - Turner (2020)
   Optional Further Reading: What Makes Time Special? (Chapters 2-5) - Calendar (2017)

Week 3: Persistence
Endurantism vs Perdurantism?: A Debate Reconsidered - Magidor (2016)
Week 4: Persistence and Laws
Lawful Persistence - Builes and Teitel (MS)
  Optional Background: Determinism De Re - Hawthorne (2006)
  Optional Background: Can We Do Without Fundamental Individuals? - Dasgupta (2015)

Week 5: Experience and Time I
Experience and the Passage of Time - Skow (2011)
Experiencing Time (Chapter 2) - Prosser (2016)

Week 6: Experience and Time II
Presentism and Temporal Experience - Akiko Frischhut (2017)

Week 7: The Epistemic Objection to 4D A-theories
Good-Bye Growing Block - Merricks (2006)
Hazardous Conditions Persist - Deasy and Tallant (Forthcoming)
  Optional Further Reading: Growing Block’s Past Problems - Forbes (2016)

Week 8: Contingentism vs Necessitism
Anti-Metaphysicalism, Necessity, and Temporal Ontology - Balaguer (2016)
The Unique Groundability of Temporal Facts - Cusbert and Miller (2018)

Week 9: Empirical (In)Equivalence
Look at the Time! - Builes (2021)
  Optional Background: Sleeping Beauty and the Dynamics of De Se Beliefs - Meacham (2008)

Week 10: The Passage of Time
Can Time Pass at the Rate of 1 Second Per Second? - Raven (2011)
Why does time pass? - Skow (2012)
  Optional Background: Time Without Change - Shoemaker (1969)

Week 11: Rates of Change
  Optional Further Reading: A Puzzle About Rates of Change - Builes and Teitel (2020)

Week 12: Rates of change and the A-theory
Dynamic Quantities for Dynamic Time - Builes and Spencer (MS)