Course Guide

(PHIL10127 / PHIL10125)
Philosophy of Time Travel Course Guide 2014/15

Course Organiser:

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Office hours (term time): Thursdays 1 – 3 pm

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Department of Philosophy
School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences
University of Edinburgh
1. Course Aims and Objectives

This course will offer detailed seminars on key philosophical issues in the philosophy of time travel, largely with an analytical slant. Students should end this course conversant with a range of significant metaphysical (and other) issues surrounding time travel. No detailed logical, scientific or metaphysical expertise will be assumed, and the course is intended to be accessible to students with a wide range of philosophical interests and aptitudes.

2. Intended Learning Outcomes

To develop further the philosophical skills, and to extend and deepen the philosophical knowledge, acquired in previous philosophy courses. Transferable skills that students will acquire or hone in taking this course should include the following:

- written skills (through summative essays)
- oral communication skills (through lecturer-led and/or student-led seminar discussions)
- presentation skills (through giving and criticising student presentations)
- analytical skills (through exploring a carefully-chosen series of philosophical texts)
- ability to recognise and critically assess an argument.

3. Lecture Times and Locations

First semester (PHIL10127): Tuesdays 09.00 – 10.50
Medical School, BLT (Basement Lecture Theatre) - Doorway 6

Second semester (PHIL10125): Thursdays 09.00 – 10.50
Dugald Stewart Building, room 1.20

Please note that, because of high demand, this course is being taught twice this year (2014-15), on Tuesdays in semester one and Thursdays in semester two. Please do not attend seminars for both versions, otherwise the whole point of running the course twice (i.e. to afford more room both physically and for discussion) will be defeated.
4. Seminar Content and Readings

Asterisked items below are available from JSTOR. All other journal items should be available via the electronic journals access facilitated by the Library / MyEd. Any problems, do please let me know.

Main texts:
What with this being a research-led course, driven by my ongoing monograph and spin-offs articles on sundry aspects of time travel, there isn’t yet a full-length book on the philosophy of time travel – although I’m working on it. However, below is probably the best available introduction to space and time in general:
  Durham Acumen 2010, multiple copies should be available in the Library Hub Reserve (at shelf-mark BD632 Dai).

I spent the academic year 2008-2009 on research-leave, working on a raft of time-travel related articles plus a book. On request, I can circulate draft papers and other works-in-progress of my own.

Please note that the following lists of readings are prioritised, with the most important / useful readings at the top. So the recommended way to tackle the suggested readings is to start at the top of each list and work downwards.

**Week 1**
Introducing the Debate – What is Time Travel?
The Lewisian Analysis.
Recommended reading:

Useful background / of related interest:

**Week 2**
Developments of, and Objections to, the Lewisian Analysis.
Recommended reading:

Useful background / of related interest:

Week 3

A) Introducing Relativity.
• Barry Dainton, Time and Space, Chapters 16 and 18, 254-68, 284-300.
• Craig Bourne, A Future for Presentism, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, Ch. 5: 141–159. (Whole book available electronically via the Main Library.)

Further reading:

B) Gödel and the Unreality of Time

Recommended reading:
• Barry Dainton, Time and Space, Chapter 19, 314-19.
• Craig Bourne, A Future for Presentism, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, Ch. 8: 204–224. (Whole book available electronically via the Main Library.)

Useful background / of related interest:

Week 4

The Cheshire Cat Problem and Other Spatial Perplexities.

Recommended reading:

Useful background / of related interest:

Week 5
Information Loops and Object Loops.
Recommended reading:
Useful background / of related interest:

*** NB Semester Two: Innovative Learning Week 17\textsuperscript{th} – 21\textsuperscript{st} February 2014 ***

Week 6
Recommended reading:
Useful background / of related interest:

B) Time Travel and Non-Turing Computation.
Recommended reading:
• AR, ‘The Big Pitowsky: Doing Infinitely Many Tasks in (Less Than) No Time At All’, MS still in progress.
Useful background / of related interest:

Week 7
Branching-Histories Time Travel.
The Autonomy Principle.
Recommended reading:
• John Abbruzzese, ‘On Using the Multiverse to Avoid the Paradoxes of Time Travel’, Analysis, 61, 2001: 36-38.
Useful background / of related interest:

**Week 8**

The Nomological Contrivance Problem.
Bananas-Skins and Tomato-Rolling.

Recommended reading:

Useful background / of related interest:

**Week 9**

A) Travel in Multi-Dimensional Time.

Recommended reading:
- G. C. Goddu, ‘Time Travel and Changing the Past (or How to Kill Yourself and Live to Tell the Tale)’, *Ratio*, 16, 2003: 16-32.

Useful background / of related interest:

B) Testimony to Time-Travel.

Recommended reading:

**Week 10**

A) Free Will and Determinism

Recommended reading:

Useful background / of related interest:

B) Personal Identity
Recommended reading:

Useful background / of related interest:

*Week 11*
Recapitulation / Revision.

5. Academic Support

**Course Organiser**
The Course Organiser (CO) is your first point of contact for any queries about the course. The CO can comment and give advice on your plans/outlines for assessed work for the course. Plans or outlines should be sent to the CO in good time before the assessment deadline. What counts as ‘in good time’ may depend on the workload of the CO, and students should consult with the CO about this. COs will help you with any problems understanding material during the course, or any issue pertaining to the organisation of the course and marking criteria. After assessed work is submitted, you can ask your CO to explain your feedback comments, and how your feedback relates to your mark, as well as giving advice on how to improve.

You are welcome to come to see the CO during his or her weekly office hours. No appointment is necessary. Outside office hours, please email the CO for an appointment.

**Personal Tutor and Student Support Officers**
In the event of any difficulty of a non-academic nature (illness, disability, personal circumstances), you should contact your Personal Tutor or Student Support Officer.

**PPLS Undergraduate Student Handbook**
More information about Academic Support is available in the PPLS Undergraduate Student Handbook, including information about academic guidance; late coursework and plagiarism; illness and disability adjustments, and useful sources of advice. The Handbook can be found here:

6. Assessment

This course will be assessed by a mixture of written and presented instruments of assessment, which will encourage not merely written responses but active participation in the seminar from all students.

1. A short presentation (10% overall mark): Generally at the relevant seminar but no later than the end of teaching. NB. To be submitted electronically to A.Richmond@ed.ac.uk

2. A short (no more than 1,500 word) essay (40% overall mark):
   S1: Due no later than 4 pm on Thursday 23\textsuperscript{rd} October 2014
   S2: Due no later than 4 pm on Thursday 26\textsuperscript{th} February 2015

3. A final long (no more than 2,000 word) essay (50% overall mark):
   S1: Due no later than 4 pm on Thursday 11\textsuperscript{th} December 2014
   S2: Due no later than 4 pm on Thursday 23\textsuperscript{rd} April 2015

4. Only for Honours students doing one of the long essays for the coursework dissertation option:
   S1: Coursework Dissertation Title Hand In Date: no later than 4 pm on Thursday 6\textsuperscript{th} November 2014.
   A 5000 word essay (100\% of the overall mark) due no later than 4 pm on Thursday 22\textsuperscript{nd} January 2015.

   S2: Coursework Dissertation Title Hand In Date: no later than 4 pm on Thursday 5\textsuperscript{th} March 2015.
   A 5000 word essay (100\% of the overall mark) due no later than 4 pm on Thursday 23\textsuperscript{rd} April 2015, by 4pm.

Submission of Coursework
The majority of courses use electronic submissions for Honours coursework. For essay submission instructions please see the instructions on Learn. Please note you should not include your name or matriculation number on coursework, only your exam number.

Word Count Penalties
Essays must not exceed the word limit, which includes footnotes but excludes bibliography. The precise word count must be written on the coversheet. Overlong
essays will be penalised according to the following rule: 5% will be deducted for every 100 words, or part thereof, over the word limit. So, 1-100 words over lose 5%; 101-200 words over lose 10%; 201-300 words over lose 15%; and so on.

Penalties for Late Submission of Essays

Unless an extension has been granted, essays must be submitted by the dates shown in the table of Submission Dates below. Essays submitted late without an extension may not be marked, but, if marked, will incur a penalty (in accordance with section 3.8 of the University Undergraduate Assessment Regulations at:

- http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Regulations/Temp/TaughtAssessmentRegulations.pdf

For each working day that the work is late there will be a reduction of the mark by 5% of the maximum obtainable mark (e.g. a mark of 65% on the common marking scale would be reduced to 60% up to 24 hours later). This penalty applies for up to five working days, after which a mark of zero will be given. Please note:

**Regulation 14 Assessment deadlines: Student responsibilities**

It is a student’s responsibility to ascertain and meet his or her assessment deadlines, including examination times and locations.

If you need an extension on the submission date of your essay, please contact the Teaching Office.

**Plagiarism and academic misconduct**

Plagiarism and academic misconduct are forms of dishonesty that are harmful to other students and disrespectful to your teachers.

Essays will be checked using Turnitin (among other resources). All suspected academic misconduct will be reported to the PPLS Academic Misconduct Officer.

The University treats plagiarism by honours students as a disciplinary offence, and anyone caught plagiarising will be referred to the College’s Academic Misconduct Officer. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism or need further guidance, you should consult the University’s guidelines:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/undergraduate/discipline/plagiarism

Note well that plagiarism and academic misconduct need not be intentional.

Students can read more about plagiarism and proper referencing practices, and use Turnitin on a trial copy of their essays, in the Philosophy Tools course on LEARN.
7. Feedback

You will get many feedback opportunities in this course. Feedback could be in the form of an essay, a draft write-up, self-generated or peer feedback, small group discussions or quizzes within lectures. This may include ‘feedforward’ opportunities such as how to write an essay, or prepare for an exam.

Some forms of feedback are automatic, such as the feedback you will receive on assessed work. It is the School's policy that marked coursework is to be returned to students within *three working weeks* of submission, unless notified otherwise by email. Please remember that University holidays and vacation periods do not count as working weeks. During this 3 week period:

- The Teaching Office checks all submitted work from all courses is complete
- The Teaching Office contacts students who haven't submitted work or submitted only incomplete information
- Assessed work sent out to examiners
- 2 working weeks are allocated for marking and feedback by examiners
- 1 working week is allocated for moderation by another staff member
- Teaching Office collates marks and releases them to you via Grade Center

Philosophy at Edinburgh is one of the departments most prompt at giving students feedback in the UK. Most UK philosophy departments ask students to wait for at least 4 weeks.

Feedback on assessed work is only a fraction of the feedback opportunities available to you during the course. We strongly encourage you to take advantages of the wide range of voluntary forms of feedback, including:

- Asking and answering questions in lectures or classes
- Asking questions of your Course Organiser or lecturer in their office hours, and discussing essay plans/outlines or previous feedback on assessed work
- Discussing work with examiners on Philosophy's dedicated Feedback Days
- Participating in Autonomous Learning Groups
- Talking about your ideas outside class with fellow Philosophy students
- Taking your essay to PhilSoc essay surgeries
- Participating in PhilSoc discussion groups and study-skills events
- Participating in PhilSoc debates and talks: [http://www.philsoc.eu](http://www.philsoc.eu)
- Participating in the British Undergraduate Philosophy Society, including undergraduate conferences: [http://www.bups.org](http://www.bups.org)

8. Learning Resources

Learn

This year the majority of courses will use electronic submissions for Honours coursework. For essay submission instructions please see the instructions on
LEARN. Please note you should not include your name or matriculation number on coursework, only your exam number.

University of Edinburgh Library
The University of Edinburgh has an extensive suite of paper and electronic learning resources. The library’s resources can be searched online via MyEd.

Autonomous Learning Groups (ALGs)
Each course has dedicated Autonomous Learning Groups. In week 2, you will receive an email from our Student Support Officer (Sarah Nicol, sarah.nicol@ed.ac.uk) asking if you would like to be part of an Autonomous Learning Group (ALG). If you agree, Sarah will form your ALG and email you with details of which group you are in, and the email addresses of the other members of the group. It is up to you, the members of the ALG, to organize the meetings. You decide how often to meet and what to do in your ALG. ALGs are designed to help you learn and get to know your classmates; they are not a formal requirement of the course. It is important to note that assessment in your courses is non-competitive: you are not judged against classmates, only against the general grade criteria. It is in your interests to help each other.

As a rough guide, we suggest your ALG meets every 2-3 weeks. You could use the meetings to:

- Read and discuss the papers together
- Discuss essay-writing and time-management techniques
- Constructively critique each other’s draft essays or plans
- Read some of the further readings or related papers
- Work on presentations or discussion posts that the class may involve
- Share tips on career advice

Please email the CO of the course if you feel that it would be useful for the group if she or he joined one of your sessions. Please contact Sarah if you find it necessary during the semester to transfer into a different group.

Study Skills Workshops
This year-long dedicated series of events for Philosophy students includes sessions on all aspects of the degree programme: essay writing, exam preparation, the dissertation, how to give a presentation, how to use learning resources effectively, and philosophy as a transferrable skill beyond the classroom:


Innovative Learning Week
WEEK 6 INNOVATIVE LEARNING WEEK (16-20 February 2015). Normal teaching slots will be suspended and in their place will be a range of other activities such as master classes, a research day, a science fair, and guest lectures. More information
will follow nearer the time so please check the School website where details will be available on the PPLS Events page:

- [http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/students/academic-life/studies/innovative-learning](http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/students/academic-life/studies/innovative-learning)

**Online learning resources**

Useful online learning resources include:

- PhilPapers: [http://philpapers.org](http://philpapers.org)
- Google Scholar: [http://scholar.google.co.uk](http://scholar.google.co.uk)
- Philosophy Tools: sign up via the ‘Self Enrol’ option on Learn

**9. Personal Development**

Philosophy is not so much a subject matter as a method of enquiry. Learning how to do philosophy is closely tied to your personal development. What you learn in the classroom will help you in contexts beyond those of your degree programme. This includes, but is not limited to:

*Confidence building:*
- Learning new concepts
- Critically approaching work of establisher thinkers
- Using rigorous thinking to assess the claims of yourself and others
- Managing your own time and workload

*Improving communication skills:*
- Participating in class discussion
- Gaining skills to research and marshal evidence
- Gaining skills to communicate complex abstract positions in writing
- Gaining skills to present clear, cogent, and sustained arguments for a claim
- Working effectively to a deadline and/or word limit

*Confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems:*
- Experience with solving new problems each week
- Being challenged to research problems and think critically during the course
- Acquiring a wide-reaching conceptual toolkit to analyse and address unfamiliar claims

**10. Organisation and Management**

*Attendance monitoring*

The University expects **all students to attend all their University classes, lectures and tutorials etc**, whether or not these are described as “compulsory” by the School. This includes participating fully in the requirements of all courses,
including submitting assignments, contributing to tutorials and workshops, attending meetings with Personal Tutors and sitting examinations.

Your attendance will be monitored by the School, so that staff can help you to manage your progress through the courses. We will do this so we can be quickly alerted to any additional pastoral or academic support needs any student might require, and so that the School can provide advice, guidance or support in a timely and useful manner.

**Student feedback to us**

We take your views seriously, and past comments from students have prompted some of the most beneficial changes in teaching. If you have any suggestions on how to improve this course further, please contact:

- Your Course Organiser
- Dr Mark Sprevak, Director of Undergraduate Teaching ([mark.sprevak@ed.ac.uk](mailto:mark.sprevak@ed.ac.uk))
- Dr Tillmann Vierkant, Head of Philosophy ([t.vierkant@ed.ac.uk](mailto:t.vierkant@ed.ac.uk))

### 11. Marking Criteria

**University of Edinburgh Common Marking Scheme**

- [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme)

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| A1    | 90-100     | Excellent  
*Outstanding in every respect, the work is well beyond the level expected of a competent student at their level of study.* |
| A2    | 80-89      | Excellent  
*Outstanding in some respects, the work is often beyond what is expected of a competent student at their level of study.* |
| A3    | 70-79      | Excellent  
*Very good or excellent in most respects, the work is what might be expected of a very competent student.* |
| B     | 60-69      | Very Good  
*Good or very good in most respects, the work displays thorough mastery of the relevant learning outcomes.* |
| C     | 50-59      | Good       
*The work clearly meets requirements for demonstrating the relevant learning outcomes.* |
Pass
The work meets minimum requirements for demonstrating the relevant learning outcomes.

Marginal fail
The work fails to meet minimum requirements for demonstrating the relevant learning outcomes.

Clear fail
The work is very weak or shows a decided lack of effort.

Bad fail
The work is extremely weak.

Bad fail
The work is of very little consequence, if any, to the area in question.

Philosophy-Specific Marking Guidelines

These guidelines explain how the University of Edinburgh’s Common Marking Scheme applies in the particular case of philosophy work. The guidelines also offer tips on how to improve your work, describing what ingredients you need to move up a grade boundary. The approach is constructive: start with the minimal requirements, and then tell you what you need to add to do better.

Explaining the function of these guidelines:

1. These are only guidelines; marking still requires discretion and judgment.

2. The guidelines are “bottom up” — each band presupposes that the student has at least satisfied the criteria laid down under the lower bands. So to get a first, it is assumed that you at least satisfy all the criteria for a 2-1, etc.

3. Each set of guidelines should be understood not as providing necessary and sufficient conditions for a mark in the band specified. Rather, the guidelines under each band provide a kind of “cluster” which defines a paradigm of a piece of work falling within the band in question. A piece of work might deviate from the paradigm in certain respects but still fall within the band. It might help to explain the idea of a paradigm being invoked here. By way of comparison, an ornamental chair (as one might find in a museum, and that is not fit for sitting on) is a less paradigmatic instance of a piece of furniture than an ordinary sofa, but plausibly an ornamental chair still counts as a piece of furniture all the same. This is because it satisfies enough of the criteria in the cluster of concepts associated with being a piece of furniture, though it satisfies fewer of those criteria than an ordinary sofa. Similarly, a piece of work might be a less than fully paradigmatic instance of a 2-1 but still count as a 2-1 all the same.

4. Although they are written in a way that might naturally suggest a binary
reading, the guidelines are generally scalar — satisfying each of them comes in degrees, and is not all or nothing. This is important, and relevant to the “paradigm” point above, in that doing better with respect to one criteria under a given band could offset doing slightly less well with regards to another. Also, precisely where within the band a piece of work is assessed will typically reflect how well the work does in terms of each of these criteria.

5. The guidelines apply most clearly for essays. In the case of exam questions, part of the exercise will be for the student to work out the extent to which the question calls for something going beyond pure exegesis.

6. For history of philosophy classes, where the instructor explicitly indicates this is the case, the contrast between exegesis and original argument may be less clear. In these cases, the original argumentation may be an original argument for an interpretation or reading of a text, for example. Individual instructors have some discretion in explaining how the specific details of their course mean these guidelines should be interpreted. As mere guidelines, they provide only a sort of “default setting” rather than a one size fits all set of prescriptions, amenable to only one canonical interpretation.

General Guidelines:

- Clarity:
  - Is the writing clear?
  - Is the grammar and spelling correct?
  - Is the language used appropriate?

- Structure:
  - Is a clear thesis or position stated?
  - Is an argument, or arguments, offered in support of the thesis?
  - Does each part of the essay/exam have a clearly indicated purpose?

- Understanding:
  - Is a sound understanding of relevant issues demonstrated?
  - Is the exposition of others’ views accurate?
  - Are technical terms adequately defined?

- Originality:
  - Is there evidence of independent thought?
  - Is there critical engagement with the material?

- Argument:
  - Is the argument convincing?
  - Are the inferences valid?
  - Are obvious objections anticipated?

Grade Bands:

Fail (less than 40)

Third Class (40–49):

- Writing is generally unclear. Frequent spelling or grammar mistakes, incorrect language, and/or excessively convoluted sentence structure.
• Neglects clearly to state a thesis or position and/or fails to support this with arguments. Contains irrelevant material, or material whose relevance is not adequately explained.
• Demonstrates a barely adequate understanding of central issues. Contains several errors in exposition or in explanation of concepts.
• No evidence of independent thought or critical engagement. Merely rehashes arguments from readings or lectures.
• Where arguments are given, these are weak, depend on invalid inferences or implausible premises. Fails to anticipate obvious objections.

Lower Second Class (50–59):

• Writing is generally clear, but there are occasional spelling/grammar infelicities and/or poorly constructed sentences.
• A thesis/position is indicated but not clearly defined. Some arguments given, but their structure often unclear.
• Demonstrates a basic grasp of key concepts, but occasional inaccuracies in exposition/explanation.
• Little evidence of independent thought. Some suggestion of original ideas, but these are under-developed and/or expressed unclearly.
• Arguments generally weak or unconvincing.

Upper Second Class (60–69):

• Writing is generally clear, marred only by the rare spelling/grammar infelicity or poorly constructed sentence.
• A thesis/position is indicated and clearly defined. Arguments are given with relatively clear structure. It is generally clear what is going on in each section, why one section follows on from the previous one, and how the essay as a whole hangs together.
• Demonstrates a solid understanding of the key concepts, and the exposition is generally accurate and thorough.
• Substantial evidence of original thought – either an original argument of some kind for a familiar position or an original argument for a novel position. In either case, the argument should be reasonably well developed.
• The author’s original arguments are interesting and promising, but fairly central or glaring problems with the argument are not discussed or addressed in any way, or are given only a highly cursory treatment.

Low First Class (70–79):

• Writing is very clear and engaging throughout. Where examples are used they are both relevant and memorable. The writing will also be concise.
• The essay’s structure is not only clear and well defined; it also provides a satisfying narrative arc.
• Demonstrates a deep understanding of the key concepts. Explains other philosopher’s ideas in the author’s own terms, clearly presenting those ideas in a way that indicates that the author has “made them his/her own.” Where technical terms are used they are always carefully defined.
• Highly original thought, with well developed arguments. The exegesis will generally be sufficiently concise as to allow the author to develop his or her own arguments in considerable detail.
• The author very carefully considers the most central and obvious problems with his/her original argument(s) and has interesting things to say about them.

Mid-First Class (80–89):
• Writing is crystal clear and highly engaging throughout. Memorable examples are used to underscore key points. The writing is concise without coming across as terse or stilted.
• The essay’s structure is clear and well defined, with a highly satisfying narrative arc.
• Demonstrates a deep understanding of key concepts. Not only explains the ideas of other philosophers in a way that shows he/she has “made them his/her own,” but that actually casts new light on how we might charitably understand the ideas of those philosophers.
• Very original thought, above and beyond what we would normally expect from an undergraduate. These original ideas will be developed in great detail.
• The author very carefully considers the most central and obvious problems with his/her original argument(s) and has prima facie convincing rejoinders. Author may also consider more subtle objections to his/her argument(s)/view(s).

High First Class (90–100):
• Writing is extremely clear, concise, and engaging — of a publishable quality.
• The essay’s structure is extremely clear and well-defined, with a highly satisfying narrative arc.
• Demonstrates a deep understanding of key concepts. Not only explains the ideas of other philosophers in a way that shows he/she has “made them his/her own,” but that actually casts new light on how we might charitably understand the ideas of those philosophers.
• A highly original and well developed line of argument and/or novel view, such that the essay is publishable, at least in an undergraduate or postgraduate journal, perhaps bordering on being publishable in a mainstream professional journal.
• The author considers the most important objections to his/her arguments/views. The replies are generally convincing and subtle. If space allows, less obvious objections may also be discussed in interesting ways.