

# Metaphysics

## Philosophy 415

Professor Loewer loewer@rci.rutgers.edu

Office hours: Tues 12-2

### Course Book:

- *What Makes Time Special?*, Craig Callender, Oxford University Press
- In addition there will be papers posted on the class Sakai site

### Course Work:

- By Tuesday of each week send me by email two questions about the reading for that week
- Short 5-page paper due March 9
- Course paper (10 pages) due May 6

This course will be mostly about the metaphysics of time though we will also take detours to discuss some related metaphysical issues involving laws, causation, counterfactuals, free-will, space etc. The central question of the course is the relationship between our 'manifest' conception of time and the conception(s) of time implicit in scientific theories especially physics. By 'manifest' conception I mean the philosophical account of time that is based on and takes at face value our ordinary temporal concepts and language. On the manifest account, time is apparently a fundamental feature of reality. The present – what occurs now – seems to be special in an objective way that makes the present more 'real' than past or future. Time seems to flow from past to future underlying temporal directionality and making the past closed and done with while the past is open and full of possibilities. These 'features' of time are reflected in the grammar (tenses) of our language. In contrast, the account(s) of time found in physics apparently has no special role for the present (or now) and nothing corresponding to the flow of time. It may be that the directionality of time (the distinction between past and future) has no basis in science and perhaps even that fundamentally time is a dimension like space and neither is fundamental.

The mismatch between our manifest and scientific conceptions leads to a philosophical issue: is the scientific account incomplete? And if so can it be supplemented? Is the manifest account illusory? Or can it in some sense be reduced to or explained in terms of the scientific account. Here is what Einstein is reported to have said about the relation between manifest and scientific conceptions of time as reported by Carnap:

*Once Einstein said that the problem of the Now worried him seriously. He explained that the experience of the Now means something special for man, something essentially different from the past and the future, but that this important difference does not and cannot occur within physics.... That this*

*experience cannot be grasped by science seems to him a matter of painful but inevitable resignation (1963,37–38).*

**Tentative Syllabus:**

**Jan 16:** First Meeting. Denise Dykstra will lead the first class.

**Jan 19:** Read Chapter 1 *What Makes Time Special?*

**Jan 23, 26:** Ch 1 continued

**Jan 30, Feb 2:** Ch 2 Relativity

**Feb 6, 9:** Ch 3 'Presentism and the Space-time Manifold' Dean Zimmerman

**Feb 13, 16:** Ch 4 Quantum Mechanics and Time

**Feb 20, 23:**

**Feb 27, March 2:**

**March 6, 9:**

**March 13, 16:** Spring Break.

**March 20, 23:**

**March 27, 30:**

**April 3, 6:**

**April 10, 13:**

**April 17, 20:**

**April 24, 27:**