



# TIME & NARRATIVE

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Time is the single, indispensable element common to all the arts we call literary—from epic poems to novels, flash-fiction, movies, plays and comics. It is so because the fundamental course of language is temporal: meaning discloses itself as we proceed *through* language, page by page, sentence by sentence, word by word, syllable by syllable, phoneme by phoneme. As a result of this ontological status, perhaps, story-telling has always been concerned with the temporal character of human experience: the earliest literary criticism deals with narrative emplotment (*muthos*) as the fundamental literary act: for Aristotle, the poet was above all a maker of plots.

This course will consider the relationship between the philosophy of time and imaginative literature in light of two cardinal developments in twentieth century thought: (1) The so-called 'linguistic turn' in philosophy, which slowly gave rise to the dedicated study of the logic, principles and practices of narrative representation, in what Tzvetan Todorov termed 'Narratology' (1969). (2) The revolution in physics and popular culture inaugurated almost exactly one hundred years ago when Albert Einstein completed the final version of his General Theory of Relativity and published a book about both Special and General theories for a popular audience, transforming the formal and thematic possibilities of narrative literature as surely as his theories transformed Newtonian physics.

Informed by the phenomenological hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur in particular, this course will put these developments into conjunction, and explore the theories, concepts, and analytical procedures that they together enable. We will be concerned with narratives on—and of—the edge. We will read text in a range of genres—verse, prose, drama, cinema—and of none, reserving a special place in our inquiry for what might be considered a minor and idiosyncratic literature or else the meta-narrative literature *par excellence*: the time-travel story. As David Wittenberg remarks: 'Narratology is the very *mise-en-scène* of time travel fiction, and time travel itself the machinery by which narrative is manufactured' (*Time Travel: The Popular Philosophy of Narrative* [Fordham, 2012], 8).

See you . . . then!

## PRIMARY TEXTS

- Amis, Martin. *Time's Arrow*. Vintage, 2003.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 4th Edition. U of Toronto Press, 2017.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Krapp's Last Tape*. [\*Available via Literature Kiosk]
- Bradbury, Ray. 'A Sound of Thunder.' [\*Available via Literature Kiosk]
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*. Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Einstein, Albert. *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*. Princeton U.P. 2015.
- Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time*. Bantam, 2016.
- Heinlein, Robert. *By His Bootstraps* and 'All You Zombies.' [\*Available via Literature Kiosk]
- Nabakov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*. Penguin, 2000.
- Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. Sceptre, 2014.
- Marker, Chris, Dir. *La Jetée*. (1962).
- Moorcock, Michael. *Behold The Man*. [\*Available via Literature Kiosk]
- Wells, H.G. *The Time Machine*. Penguin, 2005.

## SECONDARY READINGS

- St. Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. Penguin, 1961.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 'What is Becoming?' *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. 3 ed. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Wiley, 2017.
- Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time*. Bantam, 1998.
- McHugh, Heather. 'Moving Means, Meaning Moves: Notes on Lyric Destination' *Poets Teaching Poets: Self and the World*. University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science and Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 'Narrative Time,' *Critical Inquiry* 7.1 (Autumn, 1980), pp. 169-190.
- Wittenberg, David. *Time Travel: The Popular Philosophy of Narrative*. Fordham U. P., 2012.

## PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE OF READINGS

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Week 8  | Film School Rejects, '10 Best Structured Movies of all Time'<br>Wittenberg, from <i>Time Travel: The Popular Philosophy of Narrative</i> 79-90<br>Wells, <i>The Time Machine</i><br>Bradbury, 'A Sound of Thunder'                          |
| Week 10 | Bal, <i>Narratology</i> 3-153.<br>Moorcock, <i>Behold the Man</i><br>Wittenberg, from <i>Time Travel: The Popular Philosophy of Narrative</i> 1-32  |
| Week 11 | Bal, <i>Narratology</i> 154-187.<br>Nabokov, <i>Pale Fire</i><br>McHugh, Heather. 'Moving Means, Meaning Moves: Notes on Lyric Destination' <i>Poets Teaching Poets: Self and the World</i> .   |
| Week 12 | Mitchell, <i>Cloud Atlas</i><br>Nietzsche, on Eternal Return, from <i>The Gay Science</i><br>Deleuze, 'What is Becoming?' [in <i>Literary Theory, An Anthology</i> , pp. 471-3]   |
| Week 13 | Deleuze, <i>Cinema 1: The Movement Image</i> 1-113, [selections from <i>Cinema 2: The Time Image</i> ]<br>Marker, <i>La Jetée</i><br>Beckett, <i>Krapp's Last Tape</i>  |
| Week 14 | Hawking, 'Space and Time' in <i>A Brief History of Time</i><br>Einstein, from <i>Special and General Relativity</i> 1-71.<br>Heinlein, 'All You Zombies'<br>Wittenberg, from <i>Time Travel: The Popular Philosophy of Narrative</i> 67-78. |
| Week 15 | Einstein, from <i>Special and General Relativity</i> 72-132.<br>Hawking, 'Wormholes and Time Travel' in <i>A Brief History of Time</i><br>Heinlein, <i>By His Bootstraps</i>  |
| Week 17 | Amis, <i>Time's Arrow</i><br>Hawking, 'The Arrows of Time,' in <i>A Brief History of Time</i><br>Lacan, Jacques. 'Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty.' <i>Écrits</i>   |