Time, Place, Belonging: Understanding Time in Society

COURSE HANDBOOK
Semester 2 2019-20

Course Organiser: Dr Michelle Bastian
Course Code: ARCH11264

Class Times: Fridays 11am – 1pm (Weeks 1-11)
Class Location: Seminar Room 2, Minto House, Chambers Street

Image: Circadian Clock by Anaïs Moisy (Used with permission)
Introduction

Welcome to *Time, Place, Belonging*.

This course will introduce you to the emerging field of critical time studies. Complementing work that highlights the politics of place and space, we will focus on the complex role of time in social life and how it enters into contested social, cultural and political terrains. Looking at topics such as clock time, acceleration, time squeeze, as well as critical approaches such as queer temporalities, ecological time and colonial time, we will explore how time operates across cultural landscapes. This course provides you with the tools to critically analyse the role of time in social life, and to develop ways of intervening into, and perhaps even changing, time.

The aim of our course is to challenge our conceptions of what time is and how it works within society. You will develop a deeper understanding of how time is used in processes of belonging, including inclusion and exclusion. You will also explore who time is shaped by space and place.

Course Summary

This course will introduce you to the emerging field of critical time studies. Complementing work that highlights the politics of place and space, we will focus on the complex role of time in social life and how it enters into contested social, cultural and political terrains. While time can often seem like an external dimension, or a simple container for social life, this course will explore the way that time is contested and contestable. By paying attention to time in place, we will uncover the multiple kinds of time that are used by powerful and less powerful social actors. In particular we will tie time to experiences of belonging (and not belonging) to place. Topics may include speed theory and the slow movement, time and global mobilities, time pressure and labour time, time and colonization, queer temporalities, critical approaches to clock-time and the anthropology of time. The coursework will support your personal exploration of your own experiences of time and the development of interventions into the time of social life. At the conclusion of the course, you will have a greater understanding of the complexities and diversity of the time of our lives and how it shapes understandings of place, community, politics and hopes for the future.
The course will be seminar based. This means that each week we will focus on a set of key readings, in order to discuss their key points, their strengths and weaknesses, and what they add to our understandings of the role of time in society.

Aims

The course will:

1. Support students in engaging with approaches that draw the role of time into conversation with humanities and social science approaches.
2. Explore the complexity of social time(s) and the benefits and drawbacks of interdisciplinary approaches
3. Provide students with an opportunity to engage with cutting edge research with critical time studies and develop complex responses to issues raised in the course.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course, you will be able to:

- **LO1** Demonstrate knowledge of a range of theories on time, particularly its role in social life and the ways that it is contested and contestable.
- **LO2** Implement a practical understanding of how and why to apply theories and methods from multiple disciplines in order to apply time-focused research to the complex issues that form the focus of social research.
- **LO3** Develop complex and effective responses to social issues that demonstrate a critical approach and an ability to engage with cutting edge research.

Teaching & Learning Environment

**Overview**

The course will be seminar based, with each session consisting of a guided discussion of the week’s key readings. Within these sessions there will also be opportunities to discuss progress with the various coursework items and to relate our discussions to students’ broader concerns and fields of research.

**Seminars**

Each week we will have a two-hour seminar, the topic of which is detailed below. Reading must be completed before the seminar. Our focus will primarily be on the readings and developing a shared understanding of their key points, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as a deeper understanding what they add to our understandings of the role of time in social life, and our wider research concerns.
Seminars

Seminar 1

Critical frameworks for understanding time

In this seminar we will make our first attempt at tackling the question ‘What is time?’ To guide us through we’ll look at two highly influential texts which help set out the differences between the ideas of ‘real time’ and ‘social time’. Isaac Newton is often credited with shaping modern understandings of space and time, and so we’ll be going back to the source to see what he said about the nature of time. We’ll then look at a more modern sociological argument for the existence of a ‘social time’. Finally, Paul Huebener’s new book has set out an argument for ‘critical time studies’ and we’ll look at his approach in order to develop a framework to guide us through the rest of the course.

We will also spend time discussing the course more generally, including our interests and expectations, as well as the coursework items.

Required Reading

Newton (2011) Scholium on Time, Space, Place and Motion. [link]
# Part 1: Changing Times: Clocks, Synchronies, Accelerations

## Seminar 2  The Rise of Clock Time?

One of the first objects that spring to mind when we think of time is the clock. It is generally understood as a tool for telling real or scientific time. Often clock time is described as an 'objective' time. As a result, our critical time studies will begin by looking again at the clock and some of the histories around its development. Our emphasis will be on the way that clocks are actually deeply entwined with social values and human decisions over what kind of time will help achieve particular goals. Mumford and Thompson will provide us with arguments about the links between clock time and capitalism which have become common sense across the humanities and social sciences. However, as Birth argues the shift in time-telling practices from the Middle Ages to the Industrial Revolution might not be so clearly differentiated.

**Required Reading**


## Seminar 3  The synchronised society: past, present, future

After looking at some of the core accounts of social time, and questioning the nature of clock time, this seminar starts to engage more closely with how time is involved in belonging to place. Here we will look at the social nature of conceptions of the past, present and future, particularly how each one is used to synchronise communities in ways which include some and exclude others.

Hobsbawn’s influential account of ‘inventing tradition’ shows that the past is not as fixed as it might seem. Anderson’s focus on synchronicity forms a core part of his arguments for the possibility of national identity. While Golden explores the role of what we might call ‘invented futures’ and how they are involved in immigrants’ induction into new national identities. Throughout nationalism will be a key touchstone and, again we’ll try to draw out the complexities and contradictions inherent within the time of the nation.

**Required Reading**

Seminar 4  Accelerated Society

One of the most common refrains about time in current society is that it is speeding up. We are caught in an uncontrollable acceleration that leaves little time for politics, science, or contemplation, let along more everyday concerns such as family life, socialising and relaxing. However like the story of the clock’s domination of industrial time, this story, while influential, needs a more complicated approach. Rosa is perhaps one of the preeminent scholars on acceleration and so first we will look closely at his framework for thinking through time and modernity. We’ll then reflect on that story by looking at Sharma and Wajcman’s alternatives. Sharma argues for an approach to the temporal that focused on the local, particular experiences of ‘lived time’ and the way these don’t align with a universal account of speed. While Wajcman gives us a perspective on the role of digital technologies in contemporary feelings of time, and again emphasises the way the story is not as simple as it might seem.

Key Readings

Part Two: Changing Time: Everyday Agencies, Institutions, Redesigns

Seminar 5  Time work, time squeeze and maternal time

Huebener argues that a key aspect of critical time studies is an exploration of forms of ‘temporal resistance’. He describes this as “acts that operate against dominant or restrictive modes of social time”. For the next three weeks we’ll be looking at techniques which highlight the capacity of social actors to change, adapt or restructure the temporal frameworks they live within. This week we look at Michael G. Flaherty’s influential concept of 'time work'. Challenging the idea that time is simply given to us, Flaherty draws
on extensive empirical research to show the ways that individual's customise their experience of time. Slowing things down, speeding them up, distracting themselves and much more, Flaherty provides a catalogue of ways that time might be changed. The second paper we will read focuses more specifically on the types of agencies individual have in relation to time. We then move to Lois's paper which utilizes the concept of time work to explore how homeschooling mothers manage their experiences of 'time squeeze'. This week will also be useful for developing your time activism assignments.

Image: Still from '50 things my son doesn't need me for' by Tracey Kershaw

**Essential Readings**


**Seminar 6**

**Organisational time and structuring scientific research**

This week moves us to organizational studies and research that looks at how organizations and specific actors within them make use of time. Related to Flaherty's challenge to psychologists to recognised our agency in relation to time, Orlikowski and Yates take on the dichotomy between subjective and objective time arguing that there is a more nuanced inbetween position which allows for time to be created and influenced by social practice. They argue that managers focus too narrowly on clock-time in their work practices and as a result are unable to help their workforce negotiate the multiple temporal structures they are faced with. Papers by Jackson et al. and Mirmalek bring this problem to life with their research on organizational time within scientific research teams. Mirmalek's piece in particular shows the problems of not attending to multiple times, by following the difficulties encountered by scientists working on the Mars Rover projects. She outlines their ad hoc attempts to negotiate between Mars time and Earth time and the 'inter-planetary jet-lag' this produced.

**Key Readings**


Seminar 7  Smash the clocks or redesign them?

Thompson argued that one of the pivotal points in the relationship between time and labour was when workers shifted from arguing about the kind of time used to monitor their work to arguing about how many hours they would work. Thompson sees this as a capitulation to clock-time that has remained unquestioned ever since. This week, however, we will examine the possibility of reopening time up to contestation and particular questioning the possibilities of the clock. We will first look at work we have been doing at the University of Edinburgh to develop ‘temporal design’. The argument of this design approach is that if time is designed it can be redesigned. Birth’s chapter sets out nicely the way that clocks are material inventions that serve certain interests over others. The papers from Pschetz and myself then looks at how designers might get involved in the production of resistant times. Our seminar will ask whether we need a ‘critical horology’ as a complement to ‘critical cartography’.

Key Readings


Part Three: Temporal Landscapes

Seminar 8  Geographical legacies of colonised time

In this and the next two weeks we will move to a new theme looking at how social conceptions of time affect understandings of place, landscape and urban life. Johannes Fabian argued that anthropologists were complicit in colonial efforts to portray indigenous peoples as ‘backwards’ or ‘primitives’. We build on this idea in this seminar to look at how the colonial encounter tried to wrest belonging from the local inhabitants to legitimise the claims of settlers. We’ll look at how social conceptions of time were a key aspect of this. In particular, we will be asking how these battles over time have had material effects on the landscape and on present day understandings of how to manage it. An historical account from Nanni will show the role of colonising time in Australia, while Hansen and Buxton et al. will demonstrate the
consequences this has had for making place in the present. In particular we will again see how time shapes the urban fabric, and how colonising times are being rethought in the ‘fire zone’

**Key Readings**


**Seminar 9**

**Queer times of urban planning**

In our second week of looking at how time and space are intertwined, we move from critiques of colonial times to critiques of heteronormativity. We pick up on Huebener's concept of 'temporal resistance' to explore how work on queer temporalities disrupts what Freeman identifies as chrononormativity. Here we see how social conceptions of time play out over the life course, and particularly the assumption that subjects will signal their belonging to society through the proper timing of monogamous relationships, procreation and domestic life. After exploring Freeman’s framework for a queer politics of time, we will expand this via the roundtable paper. Finally, Oswin helps us tie queer temporalities to place, and particularly shows how this form of temporal discrimination and temporal resistance plays out in the urban setting and in urban design.

**Key Readings**


**Seminar 10**

**Untimely environments: managing time's multiplicity**

Throughout the course we have moved quite far away from Newton's claim that time is universal and all-encompassing. From clock time to maternal time, from organisational time to queer temporalities, we have developed a sense of time as multiple and polyvocal. We have also seen that a key issue in critical time studies is not only recognising multiple times, but analysing the ways multiple times are managed in relation to each other. Which times can be accommodated and which are suppressed? Which ones signal power and legitimacy and which ones signal an inability to fit into the dominant society?
In our final session looking at the relationships between time and space, we will highlight the more-than-human nature of landscapes and urban spaces, the multiple times that arise from these various relations, and how various forms of bureaucracy try to manage them. Revisiting Huebener’s work we will see how his emphasis on temporal literacy can be utilised in work on the environment. We then look at two specific case studies in Australia and Western Asian region of the Pamir Mountains which will help us to unpack accounts of multiple social and environmental times, and the successes and failures of societies in trying to manage them.

**Essential Readings**


**Assessment**

**Assessment Criteria**
The course is assessed in terms of how well you demonstrate your attainment of the learning outcomes in relation to the specific themes, topics and problems set out in the assessment briefs. Each item is assessed according to the three learning outcomes for the course. An overall aggregated pass mark is sufficient to pass the course.

**Feedback & Formative Assessment**
In order to help you develop the portfolio, drafts of each item will be due over the course of the semester so that you can receive formative feedback. Do take advantage of the hand-ins set out below. **Feedback will not be given on items submitted after the deadlines listed below.**

The seminars themselves are also designed to provide formative feedback throughout the semester on specific topics. Please use these sessions to progress your assignments.

**Summative Assessment**
The specific components of assessment, their weighting and their due dates are listed below. Marks given will be provisional, because all work must be verified by the final External Examination Board, but should give a reasonable assessment of your achievement of the learning outcomes for the course.
Submit a PORTFOLIO that includes the following components of work:

**Component 1**
20% of 20 credits

Time activism RESPONSE PAPER (1000 words)

In the days or weeks leading up to People Power Day (celebrated in the Philippines on the 25th February) you will devise and carry out a form of personal time activism. In other words, you will perform some act or series of acts intended to change the way you understand or use time. Your response paper will tell the story of your act(s), and should critically evaluate the intended or actual consequences with reference to materials from the course.

WEEK 6 Submit a draft by 4pm, Tuesday via LEARN. Formative feedback will be returned to you within 15 working days.

**Component 2**
30% of 20 credits

A public clock DESIGN PROPOSAL (1500 words + illustrations)

In this component you will respond to a brief asking for proposals for a new public clock for Edinburgh. You will be expected to uncover specific local issues/conflicts around time and propose a device that might respond to these concerns. It should challenge the idea that clocks are ‘objective’ and instead show a place based temporality. The proposal should be visually appealing, show depth of analysis, and show how the clock relates to issues raised in the course.

WEEK 6 Receive brief for the project.

WEEK 9 Submit a draft by 4pm, Tuesday via LEARN. Formative feedback will be returned to you within 15 working days.

**Component 3**
50% of 20 credits

A 2,500 WORD ESSAY

The final component of the portfolio consists of an essay that focuses on an issue arising from the course that you deem to be of particular importance. Your essay must be structured as a critical intervention which makes an argument and is not purely descriptive. Like the previous components the essay should demonstrate wide reading, a strong grasp of the relationship between time and social life and an ability to write clearly and effectively.

WEEK 11 Submit a short outline of the problem you would like to address in your paper by 4pm, Tuesday via LEARN. Formative feedback will be returned to you within 15 working days.

**FINAL DUE DATE FOR THE PORTFOLIO:**

MONDAY 27th April 12pm via LEARN.

Feedback will be returned 15 working days after the submission date. You must complete a Declaration of Own Work on LEARN before submitting the portfolio. Please allow for uploading time.
### Important Dates

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<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Assignment Submissions</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Seminar</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Critical frameworks for understanding time</td>
<td>17.01</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>The Rise of Clock Time?</td>
<td>24.01</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>The synchronised society: Present, past, future</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Accelerated Society</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Time Work, Time Squeeze and Maternal Time</td>
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#### Reading Week

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<td>6</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Draft of Response Paper due 4pm via LEARN</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>Organisational Time and Structuring Scientific Research Brief given for Clock design assignment</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Smash the clocks, or redesign them?</td>
<td>06.03</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Geographical Legacies of Colonised Time</td>
<td>13.03</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Draft of Design Proposal due 4pm via LEARN</td>
<td>17.03</td>
<td>Queer Times of Urban Planning</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Untimely environments: managing time’s multiplicity</td>
<td>20.03</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Short outline of essay (300 words max) due 4pm via LEARN</td>
<td>30.03</td>
<td>Course review</td>
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<td>Course review</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Mon</td>
<td>Final versions of FULL PORTFOLIO due 12pm via LEARN</td>
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### Contacts

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[Book an appointment](mailto:michelle.bastian@ed.ac.uk) with me during my office hours.

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Work Phone 0131 6515740  
Office Location Evolution House  
Office Hours Monday - Wednesday 9am - 5pm Lunch 12.30pm - 1.30pm