

Note: this is a preliminary syllabus. There might be small changes made in the readings between now and the first day of the quarter, but the course requirements will stay the same.

Keeping Time / En 151

Professor: Jocelyn Holland (she/her/hers)

Spring Quarter 2021

T/Th 1-2:30 p.m.

Zoom office hour (time to be determined)

email: jholland@caltech.edu (feel free to email me with questions about the course)

To teach about time and to learn about time is a challenge, because the experience of time inflects all aspects of human existence, from art and politics to the most mundane rhythms of daily life. In this course, we take a close look at the human experience of time, both as it has been articulated in literary texts, and as these texts have been shaped by technological developments in time keeping over the centuries. One main goal is to become aware that the human experience of time itself has a history, but the other is for you to develop a critical vocabulary with which to reflect on which aspects of time are important to you here and now, given that we have all found ourselves within a rapidly changing timescape of expectations during this past year. We will therefore take the opportunity to work on both analytical skills and on ways in which personal reflections on time can add depth and perspective to this elusive topic.

All readings will be available as pdf files on the Canvas website.

March 30	Hello & Introduction Focus: personal experiences of time / historical theories and techniques of time-keeping
April 1	To everything there is a season: Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i> (excerpt)
April 6	I know what time is, just don't ask me to explain it: St. Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> (excerpt)
April 8	Celestial clocks: Dante, <i>Paradiso</i> Canto X The hour as turning point: Petrarch, <i>Sonnet 211</i>
April 13	Time management, fifteenth-century style: Alberti, <i>Family in the Renaissance</i>
April 15	Images of Time in Baroque emblems and painting
April 20	In sickness and in health, part 1: Samuel Pepys, <i>Diary of the Year 1665</i>
April 22	In sickness and in health, part 2: more diary entries from the plague year 1665
	<u>First short essay due: Friday, April 23rd</u>
April 27	Isaac Newton on "mathematical time" vs. "common time"
April 29	An empirical view of time: Hume, <i>Treatise of Human Nature</i> , part 2 (pages 23-31)
May 4	Biological time vs. clock time: Lawrence Sterne, <i>Tristram Shandy</i> , chapters 1-4; and Sterne, "Clockmakers Reply"
May 6	Me time: Rousseau, <i>Rêveries of a Solitary Walker</i> , #2
May 11	You time: the time concepts that matter to you, here and now
	<u>Second short essay due on May 11th</u>
May 13	Confrontations with the past: Goethe, <i>Italian Journey</i> (excerpt)
May 18	Political revolution and the acceleration of time: Reinhard Koselleck, <i>Futures Past</i>

May 20	Reports from the front lines: experiencing the French Revolution first-hand
May 25	An anticipated disruption: Adalbert Stifter on the Solar Eclipse of 1842
May 27	A farewell to time: "Darkness" by Lord Byron
June 1	Overview: the human experience of time, then and now
June 3	Workshop for the final papers

Final paper: due Tuesday, June 8th

Grading breakdown:

Two short essay assignments (around 1000-1500 words): 2 x 15%: 30%
 Online attendance and participation during class time: 15%
 Annotations on assignments using Perusall: 15%
 Final paper (1500-2000 words): 40%

About the discussions and the writing assignments:

The attendance/participation component of the grade is weighted at 15% because literature courses rely heavily on contributions to the discussion: the more perspectives, the better. The Zoom format can be awkward – even though we all have had a lot of practice with it by now – so don't hesitate to let me know if you are finding it difficult to add your point of view to our class time together, and we will work something out. Also, during this quarter, you will frequently be working with small groups to focus on different aspects of the readings and provide extra input into the discussions.

In addition, we will spend part of our face-to-face time working on short writing exercises that will help you target specific analytical and writing skills. You will have a choice to complete optional short homework assignments before each paper is due to build credit towards your paper grade and receive extra feedback from me about specific areas where you think you need practice. I am always available through email or individual Zoom sessions if there is anything you would like to discuss. I can also pre-read drafts of your papers (given enough time before the due date) to provide preliminary feedback before a grade is assigned.

For help with your essays: The Hixon Writing Center (<http://www.writing.caltech.edu/>)

In my experience, students who use this resource even once during a quarter receive substantially better grades on their written work.

For help with feelings of stress: Student Wellness Services (<http://wellness.caltech.edu/>) is the place to go. They can help with all sorts of problems, from feelings of stress and isolation to basic workload issues. They understand the needs of Caltech students and have a lot of experience handling all sorts of problems, small and large.

A word about plagiarism: Plagiarism is when you take the ideas, thought process, or words (spoken or written) of another individual and use them as your own. Because we will not be writing the kind of research papers in this course that rely on many sources, the ideas you present in writing should be entirely your own. Any cases of plagiarism will be referred directly to the Dean of Undergraduates. I will work with you to show you how to quote from primary texts correctly, and the Hixon writing center is also there to help make sure you get this right. Accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism, so it is really important to know the rules ahead of time!