

Topics in Creative Writing: TIME

CRWR 516: Mondays 3:10-6pm in LA 233

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“What is time? Who can explain this easily and briefly? Who can comprehend this even in thought so as to articulate the answer in words? Yet what do we speak of, in our familiar everyday conversation, more than of time? We surely know what we mean when we speak of it. We also know what is meant when we hear someone else talking about it. What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know.” – St. Augustine



COURSE OVERVIEW

Tense, duration, chronology, perception, memory, rhythm. Time travel, flash back, simultaneity, linear progression, dream-time. “Time remains the central yet forgotten force that motivates and informs the universe, from its most cosmological principles to its most intimate living details,” argues feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz. It is also, necessarily, a central force in the making and experiencing of literature: at once organizing principle, subject, and emotional catalyst. From the arrested, “timeless” lyric to the immersive novel through whose duration you feel yourself to exist simultaneously in multiple planes, writers and readers inhabit, manipulate, and construct time.

In this course we will engage time not as a consequence of other aspects of our writing or a formal problem that must be solved, but as a central inquiry and field of play in its own right. Necessarily multi-genre and interdisciplinary, our joint project will interrogate epistemological and creative strategies from different fields and fori and manipulate and revel in them in our own. Time will be our topic of study (as we explore political, cosmological, theological, and literary arguments about the organization and apprehension of time) and our tool (as we conduct experiments in duration, representation, rhythm, and framing time). Creative writing assignments appropriate for poets, fiction writers, and non-fiction writers alike will grow from and respond to our various readings.

General Note: There will be a good deal of reading in this course, which will form the basis of our discussions. But, we will read *as writers*: texts will be above all conversations about time and literature that we join with our own creative work. This will mean a particular kind of reading practice that we will develop, hone, and interrogate over the course of the semester.

REQUIRED TEXTS

(Available at Shakespeare & Co.)

Sarah Manguso, *Ongoingness: The End of a Diary*

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past* (translated by Lydia Davis)

Octavia Butler, *Kindred*

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *DICTEE*

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

- **Creative Responses & Final Portfolio**

Each week I will provide you with prompts and creative writing assignments that grow from our readings and particular areas of inquiry about time. You will hand in **8 of these responses** over the course of the semester (which prompts you respond to is your choice). Your responses might be experiments and stand-alone assignments, or might also form part of a larger project you are already working on – in either case, however, they must clearly engage my prompts and be in conversation with course questions. Responses should be brought in, printed, to class on the day on which they are due. You may not hand in a response to an earlier prompt later in the semester, though these may become part of your portfolio.

You will revise and compile at least **6** of these responses as a **Final Portfolio** that will be due on our last class meeting. Even if your responses are not part of a larger, cohesive project, I would like you to think about the Portfolio as a discrete work that you have created, paying attention in the process of revising to relationships between the individual pieces. In addition to the creative responses, your Portfolio should include a **3-5 page reflective essay** that explores how your own creative project engages ideas about time we explored in our readings and discussions and reflects on the process of creation.

We will devote a sizeable portion of **3 class sessions** to the sharing and informal workshopping of your creative responses. (The piece you bring in to share on a particular week need not be the piece that is due on that week.) Further instructions will be discussed in class.

- **Playing with Time: Case Study & Prompt**

You will each locate one short piece of art in any genre that engages some problem or aspect of time in a way that is exciting to you. The piece should be short enough that we will be able to read (or watch) and consider it in approximately 15-20 minutes of class time. You will present this work to the class, providing us with any necessary contextual information; describing what you find compelling about its engagement with time; and articulating a few questions for discussion. It would be wonderful if your piece was somehow in conversation with the overarching theme of the week's lesson, but this is not essential. In addition, you will construct an in-class writing prompt for your classmates and me to undertake that somehow draws out or responds to some element of the artwork you selected.

Academic Integrity

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students must

familiarize themselves with the [Student Conduct Code](http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php):
(http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

Attendance: This is a discussion and workshop-based course, which means that much of our work happens in the classroom; therefore regular attendance is mandatory. The standard policy is that more than three absences in a term may result in a grade of “no credit.” Please arrive on time for class and stay until dismissal. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. If there is an emergency please contact me as soon as you can.

Participation: I expect you to come to class prepared to participate in discussions and activities in a focused, attentive, and respectful manner. In addition to completing assignments, please arrive in class armed with questions and insights about course texts and activities, ready to listen attentively to your classmates. Verbal participation is not the only kind, and I welcome other forms of engagement with our course activities.

GRADING

Participation	30%
Weekly Creative Responses	15%
Final Portfolio & Essay	40%
Playing With Time Case Study & Prompt	15%

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 25 What Is Time?

February 1 Tracking Time

Frank O'Hara, from *Lunch Poems*

Ted Berrigan, from *Sonnets*

Claudia Rankine, from *Plot*

Hoa Nguyen, “Birthday Poem” and “Strangely Touched”

Catherine Wagner, “Song: Scary Several Light”

E.P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism”

[Playing With Time: Case Study 1]

February 8 Writing (in) Time

Sarah Manguso, *Ongoingness: The End of a Diary*

Elizabeth Grosz, “Introduction” to *Time Travels*

[Work Share]

February 15 NO CLASS
Presidents' Day

February 22 Accumulating Present
Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

[Playing With Time: Case Studies 2 & 3]

February 29 Back in Time (I): Memory & Nostalgia
Marcel Proust, from "Cambrey" (*Remembrance of Things Past*)

[Playing With Time: Case Study 4]

March 7 "Imprinted Time"
Andrey Tarkovksy, "Imprinted Time" and *The Mirror* (film)

[Playing With Time: Case Study 5 & 6]

March 14 Back in Time (II): Time Travel
Octavia Butler, *Kindred*

[Work Share]

March 21 Encounter With History
Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *DICTEE*
Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History"

[Playing With Time: Case Study 7]

March 28 The Lyric (Outside of Time?)
Sappho, poems
Emily Dickinson, poems

[Playing With Time: Case Study 8 & 9]

April 4 NO CLASS
Spring Break

April 11 Body Time
Eleni Sikelianos, from *Body Clock*
Elisa Biagini, "Morgue Poems"
Walt Whitman, "To think of time ..."
wanda coleman, "'Tis Morning Makes Mother a Killer"
Anne Boyer, "This Imaginary Half-Nothing: Time"

[Work Share]

April 18 Endurance / Duration
Yoko Ono, from *Grapefruit*
Chantal Ackerman, *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (film)

[Playing With Time: Case Study 10]

April 25 Beyond Human Time
Ed Roberson, from *To See the Earth Before the End of the World*

[Playing With Time: Case Study 11 & 12]

May 2 **Presentations of Student Work**
Portfolios Due