

Faculty Seminar 2014-15 Call for Applications

The John B. Hurford '60 Center for the Arts and Humanities seeks to enhance the intellectual and cultural life at Haverford by fostering challenging exchange among faculty, students, and diverse communities of writers, artists, performers, thinkers, activists, and innovators. The Center sponsors programs that promote relationships between classic humanistic study and contemporary intellectual, artistic, and ethical currents in the wider public world.

**Faculty are invited submit an application to participate in the annual Faculty Humanities Seminar for 2014-15 *Revision/How Time Passes*,
Leader: Jill Stauffer (Philosophy/Peace, Justice and Human Rights)
Application Deadline: November 22nd, 2013**

“Remember, the future is certain. It is the past that’s unpredictable.”
—Pieter-Dirk Uys

How does time pass in politics, in language, fiction, testimony, in the writing of history and elsewhere? What is time, and how is it—for us—at the same time fixed and subject to revision? This faculty seminar will gather together an interdisciplinary group of thinkers working on various themes related to time for a year-long conversation. One way of addressing the topic orbits around discourses of justice and reconciliation. A main aim of those fields is to create a present moment that redresses a past in order to open up a future not entirely determined by past harms. That is in itself a will to revision: to make a traumatic past manageable one may need to learn how to, as Nietzsche called it, “will backwards.”

Questions such as these can be pursued in practical terms (what kinds of institutions and procedures succeed in being revisionary?) and in more philosophical ones (what kind of being is a human being such that revision—of self, of the past and present—is possible?). Applicants for the seminar should be interested in time’s role in politics and recovery, but this won’t be a seminar only on reconciliation: the content of reading and conversation will be determined at least in part by the interests of the seminar’s participants—to see how a conversation about time in its various aspects might open up new possibilities.

How does time pass? How do we experience it? How does it work on us? These questions can be approached from many different disciplinary angles. Possibilities include:

How do law and other responsive institutions redress the past in a present moment for the sake of a future not entirely determined by past harms?



How do verb tense, aspect and other time-oriented features of language influence how we experience the world?

What is the relationship of photography to time? Of film?

What kinds of temporality do we find in narrative? How does time work in fiction, in testimony, or in the writing of history, to produce meanings, and sometimes to challenge meanings?

What is the temporality of trauma?

How is time captured in a work of art? How does music express time?

What does it mean to say that social movements come “too early” or “too late”? What constitutes timeliness?

What would we gain and lose from stepping aside from the linear view of time found in narratives of progress, development or enlightenment?

How does the science of time challenge our lived experiences of time and space?

What does memory tell us about time, and how does memory exceed time (and vice versa)?

That is a long list of possible questions, each with overlaps, but also allowing different paths of approach. The impetus for the seminar is time as diachrony—as it appears in philosophical and political accounts of ethical obligation, relation to the past, and human possibility in general. Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence would have us turn “it was” into “thus I willed it,” teaching the will to will backwards, while, also for Nietzsche (who called himself the “untimeliest” thinker) *ressentiment* builds a determined future when it fails to extricate itself from a past or present it wishes were otherwise. For Levinas, responsibility for others occurs as a diachrony that cuts through and possibly modifies the synchronies of linear time. This relation to others comes from outside of time but also produces time: time is not even possible without other human beings, in Levinas’ description. The fact that I can be pulled out of myself by others, responding to them whether I will it or not, brings about the interval that changes me, where I am not identical to myself—the temporality of aging. Both of these accounts speak of the dynamism of a kind of time that is a form of fate that we cannot escape and, at the same time, is subject to revision.

These features of philosophical time, wherein time runs backwards, produces subjects, or halts the progress of the future, bear on political reality as well. The aim of the seminar is to gather together an interdisciplinary group of thinkers and practitioners working on various themes related to time, not only to help each of us expand our ideas on the topic, but to prompt all of us to learn to communicate complicated ideas across disciplinary and methodological boundaries. Such translation is also a form of interpretation, and may lead us to reinterpret our own projects, pursue new directions in thought or composition, or imagine new sites of collaboration.

DEADLINE: November 22, 2013

Open to all faculty on tenure track or a continuing appointment

To apply, please send a pdf as an attachment to hcah@haverford.edu. In the subject line, type “Faculty Seminar-Your Surname”.

Describe your interest in the seminar in a substantial paragraph and indicate specific ways that your teaching and scholarly interests might contribute to and/or benefit from the seminar.