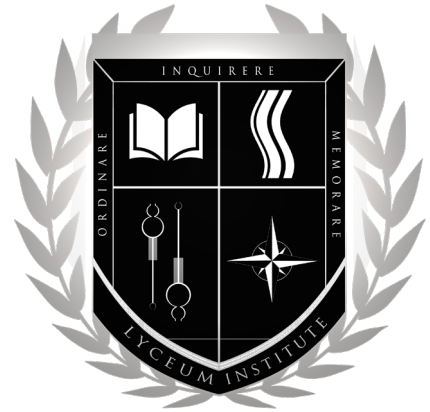


THE PHILOSOPHY OF TIME

PART I: FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE RENAISSANCE

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

[2026 Q4]



DESCRIPTION

“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. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know.”

These words (from Augustine’s *Confessions*, Book XI) identify for us all a common experience and perhaps as well a common conundrum. Indeed, we twenty-first-century moderns, far more than those in centuries past, tend to take time for granted. We see it displayed everywhere on our clocks—phones, computers, ovens, microwaves, coffee makers, televisions, hanging on the wall—and seldom have cause even to think about whether these signs are correct, so many of these clocks being set for us, giving us an extrinsic authority for time.



How much less, then, do we find cause to think about time itself? About *what it is*?

Of course, time still dominates our lives: we use its measured units to order our lives, speaking of seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years. We cannot do anything outside of or independent of time. We rely on it in our shared environments, communication, and practical efforts. Most of us do not feel need for a deep understanding of its concept.

And yet, do we not often find ourselves, especially today, struggling with our feelings about time? It seems we have too little of it, that it is constantly slipping away; that it is stolen from us, that we are constantly losing it. It seems that a complacency about time’s place in our lives, and the importance of understanding time, has allowed our experience of it to become deformed. Something about our experience of time has resulted in an *unnatural* feeling.

It is the explicit aim of this seminar, which will unfold in two parts, to expand our awareness of time's own nature through a careful study of how it has been conceived and represented through major thinkers and periods of the Western world. This first part of the seminar will span from Grecian Antiquity through the Renaissance. We begin with Aristotle and proceed through the late Scholastic figures of Francisco Suárez and Joannes a Sancto Thoma, with Plotinus, Augustine, Simplicius, Thomas Aquinas, John Buridan, and Francesco Petrarch, among others, shaping our inquiries along the way.

The second part will span the Enlightenment through the Postmodern Present.

METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion session each week. Most discussion sessions are structured around selected readings from the works of thinkers engaged with the question of time. Participants are expected to have read the assigned reading and listened to the lecture prior to the session, so that they may engage in a semi-structured discussion directed and moderated by the instructor. As this is an advanced seminar, one *cannot* participate well without a *deep engagement* with the assigned reading. Moreover, *continual discussion* will foster that participation and engagement throughout the week. Participants will be expected to partake in these discussions on a regular basis and will be challenged to do so directly.

It is expected that full participation in this advanced seminar will require a minimum of **15-20+ hours per week** of reading, listening, discussing, and reviewing material.

READING

The primary texts for this seminar will be made available in PDF, primarily taking from the works of Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and other important authors from the tradition. Most primary texts will be made available in both their original languages and in English translation. Assigned readings fall into three categories: Required, Recommend, and Background. Background readings inform the lecture and their insights may be drawn upon to illuminate primary texts and issues, raised by the required and recommended readings. The assignments are **subject to change**.

Primary literature bibliography:

- Plato c.360BC: *Timaeus* – excerpt.
- Aristotle c.330BC: Φυσικῆς ἀκρόασις (*Physics*) – Book IV.10–14, Book VI.1–3.
- Augustine c.400AD: *Confessiones* – Book XI.
- Thomas Aquinas 1266–68: *Summa theologiae, prima pars* – q.10, q.46.
- Thomas Aquinas 1268–69: *Sententia super Physicam* – Book IV, lect.15–23.
- John Buridan c.1350: *Quaestiones super octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis* – Book IV, q.12–16.
- Francesco Petrarch i.1342–53: *Secretum* – excerpt.
- Marsilio Ficino i.1479–84: *Platonic Theology* – excerpt.
- Michel de Montaigne c.1580: *Essays* – excerpt.
- Francisco Suárez 1597: *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, d.50 – selections
- Joannes a Sancto Thoma [Poinot]: 1633: *Philosophiae Naturalis Prima Pars* – q.18, *De tempore*.

Secondary and background literature bibliography:

- Alexander of Aphrodisias c.200AD: *On Time*
- Plotinus c.270AD: *Enneads*, III.7.
- Themistius c.360–80AD: *Paraphrase of Physics IV*
- Simplicius c.540AD: *On Aristotle's Physics*, 4.1–5 and 10–14.
- John Philoponus c.550AD, *Commentary on Physics IV*.10–14
- Thomas Aquinas 1271: *De Aeternitate Mundi*.
- Francesco Petrarch c.1371: “The Triumph of Time”
- Yves Simon 1960: *The Great Dialogue of Nature and Space*, c.7.
- Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum 1992: *History of the Hour: Clocks and Modern Temporal Orders*.

LECTURE

Each week there will also be an audio lecture (approximately one hour in length), posted to Teams at the beginning of the week. This lecture will be based upon the assigned reading, but will also stray into related topics, or may use the reading as a launching point for addressing related issues. The purpose of these lectures is to help orient students in reading and questioning both how we interpret the texts of the Thomistic tradition as well as how we apply their lessons to our own understanding of analogy's reality, to import certain fruitful considerations from the broader context of analogy's discussion, as well as to raise specific questions that should help structure and guide our discussion sessions. As highly-technical in content and discussion, it is recommended that one listens to these lectures carefully, pausing and re-winding as necessary, while taking notes.

DISCUSSION

The heart of the seminar is the discussion session (**Saturdays 2:00pm-3:00pm ET**, officially: many sessions run longer): where all the thoughts emergent and encountered throughout the week—via the reading, lecture, and on-going textual conversations in the Teams channel—are brought into explicit conversation. This allows us to attempt a concerted effort at bringing resolution to our difficulties, and—failing such a resolution—to direct our inquiry further.

Each discussion session will begin with a brief synopsis of the week's material and a focusing on whichever aspects of that material seem most pressing. Beyond the direction provided by the instructor, participants are encouraged to bring their own concerns explicitly into view and to engage with the instructor and one another in civil debate and collective inquiry.

AUDITS OR COMPLETES

All Lyceum Institute seminar participants will be able to either *audit* the seminar or *complete* the seminar. To complete the seminar, the participant **must** submit an essay of 2000–5000 words pertaining to the interpretation of analogy's real nature, intelligibility, and/or applicability. This essay may be evaluated for publication in *Reality* and will be included in each Lyceum Institute member's profile, along with the mark of auditing or completing.

SCHEDULE

Week I 09/22–09/28	Scope of the Difficulty Lecture 1: A Fundamental Question. Required Readings: - Plato c.360BC: <i>Timaeus</i> (excerpt). - Aristotle c.330BC: Φυσικής ἀκρόασις, c.10. Recommended Reading: - Thomas Aquinas 1271: <i>Sententia super Physicam</i>, IV, lec.15-16. Background Reading: - Dohrn-van Rossum 1992: “The Division of the Day and Time-Keeping in Antiquity” in <i>History of the Hour: Clocks and Modern Temporal Order</i>.
Week II 09/29–10/05	Time as Measurement Lecture 2: Measurements and the Continuum. Required Reading: - Aristotle c.330BC: Φυσικής ἀκρόασις, IV, c.11–14. Recommended Readings: - Aristotle c.330BC: Φυσικής ἀκρόασις, VI, c.1–3. - Thomas Aquinas 1271: <i>Sententia super Physicam</i>, IV, lec.17-18. - Simon 1960: <i>The Great Dialogue of Nature and Space</i>, c.7. Background Readings: - Thomas Aquinas 1271: <i>Sententia super Physicam</i>, IV, lec.18-23. - Thomas Aquinas 1271: <i>Sententia super Physicam</i>, VI, lec.1-5.
Week III 10/06–10/12	Time as Distension of the Soul Lecture 3: Time-Consciousness and Measurement. Required Reading: - Augustine c.400AD: <i>Confessiones</i>. Recommended Reading: - Plotinus c.270ad: <i>Enneads</i>, III.7.
Week IV 10/13–10/19	Time, Eternity, and Aeviternity Lecture 4: The Immeasurable. Required Reading: - Thomas Aquinas 1266-68: <i>Summa theologiae, prima pars</i>, q.10 and q.46. Recommended Readings: - Thomas Aquinas 1271: <i>De aeternitate mundi</i>.

Week V 10/27–11/02	The Quantities of Time Lecture 5: Mechanical Numbering. Required Reading: - Buridan c.1350: <i>Quaestiones super octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis</i> – Book IV, q.12–16. Recommended Readings: - Dohrn-van Rossum 1992: “Introduction” in <i>History of the Hour: Clocks and Modern Temporal Order</i>.
Week VI 11/03–11/09	Duration and Existence Lecture 6: The Flattening of Time. Reading: Suárez 1597: <i>Disputationes Metaphysicae</i>, d.50 – selections.
Week VII 11/10–11/16	Relations of Time Lecture 7: Measuring the Intrinsic and Extrinsic. Reading: Poinsot 1633: <i>Philosophiae Naturalis Prima Pars</i> – q.18, <i>De tempore</i>.
Week VIII 11/17–11/23	Renaissance Revolutions Lecture 8: The Division of Time-Consciousness. Required Readings: - Petrarch, i.1342–53: <i>Secretum</i> III (excerpt). - Ficino i.1479–84: <i>Platonic Theology</i> (III.2). - Montaigne c.1580: <i>Essays</i> (II.12). Recommended Reading: - Petrarch c.1371: “The Triumph of Time”.