

**PHIL0115 Time and Rationality**  
**Seminar Leader: Nilanjan Das**  
**Email: [nilanjan.das@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:nilanjan.das@ucl.ac.uk)**  
**Time: Tuesdays 2-5 pm**  
**Venue: Room 102, 19 Gordon Square**

### **Overview**

How should our beliefs and desires evolve over time? Should our current beliefs and desires be constrained by our future beliefs and desires? Should evidence about our location in time have any rational impact on our beliefs and desires? In this seminar, we will focus on some recent work on epistemic and practical rationality, and see how that work can be brought to bear on these questions.

### **Course Requirements:**

This course can only be taken for credit by MPhil students. Those who are taking this seminar for credit must write an essay of about 4,500 words.

### **Reading List**

#### **Week 1: Are There Diachronic Norms of Epistemic Rationality?**

##### **Required:**

- (a) Christensen, "Diachronic Coherence and Epistemic Impartiality"
- (b) Hedden, "Time-Slice Rationality"

##### **Optional:**

- (a) Christensen, "Conservatism in Epistemology"
- (b) Lewis, "Why Conditionalize?"
- (c) Van Fraassen, "Belief and the Will"

#### **Week 2: The Problem of Defeat**

##### **Required:**

- (a) Lasonen-Aarnio, "Unreasonable Knowledge"
- (b) Weisberg, "Commutativity or Holism?"
- (c) Greco, "Cognitive Mobile Homes"

##### **Optional:**

- (a) Srinivasan, "Radical Externalism"
- (b) Gallow, "How To Learn From Theory-Dependent Evidence"
- (c) Miller, "Holistic Conditionalization and Underminable Perceptual Learning"

### **Week 3: The Problem of Bias**

#### **Required:**

- (a) Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapters 9 and 10
- (b) Salow, “The Externalist’s Guide to Fishing For Compliments”

#### **Optional:**

- (a) Titelbaum, “Tell Me You Love Me?”
- (b) Van Fraassen, “Belief and the Problem of Ulysses and the Sirens”

### **Week 4: Self-Locating Evidence**

#### **Required:**

- (a) Elga, “Self-Locating Belief and the Sleeping Beauty Problem”
- (b) Lewis, “Reply to Elga”
- (c) Arntzenius, “Some Problems for Conditionalization and Reflection”
- (d) Moss, “Updating as Communication”

#### **Optional:**

- (a) Lewis, “Attitudes De Dicto and De Se”
- (b) White, “The Generalized Sleeping Beauty Problem”
- (c) Ross, “Sleeping Beauty, Countable Additivity, and Rational Dilemmas”

### **Week 5: Regret**

#### **Required:**

- (a) Bratman, “Toxin, Temptation, and the Stability of Intention”
- (b) Harman, ““I’ll Be Glad I Did It” Reasoning and the Significance of Future Desires”

#### **Optional:**

- (a) Arntzenius, Elga, and Hawthorne, “Bayesianism, Infinite Decisions and Binding”
- (b) Hedden, “Options and Diachronic Tragedy”

### **Week 6: Newcomb**

#### **Required:**

- (a) Hare and Hedden, “Self-Reinforcing and Self-Frustrating Desires”
- (b) Wells, “Evidence and Rationalization”

#### **Background:**

Weirich, "Causal Decision Theory", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

**Optional:**

- (a) Arntzenius, "No Regrets or Edith Piaf Revamps Decision Theory"
- (b) Joyce, "Regret and Stability in Causal Decision Theory"
- (c) Briggs, "Decision-Theoretic Paradoxes as Voting Paradoxes"

**Week 7: Time-Biases**

**Required:**

- (a) Dougherty, "On Whether to Prefer Pain to Pass"
- (b) Greene and Sullivan, "Against Time-Bias"

**Background:**

Hare, "Time: The Emotional Asymmetry"

**Optional:**

- (a) Dougherty, "Future Bias and Practical Reason"
- (b) Hare, "A Puzzle About Other-Directed Time-Bias"