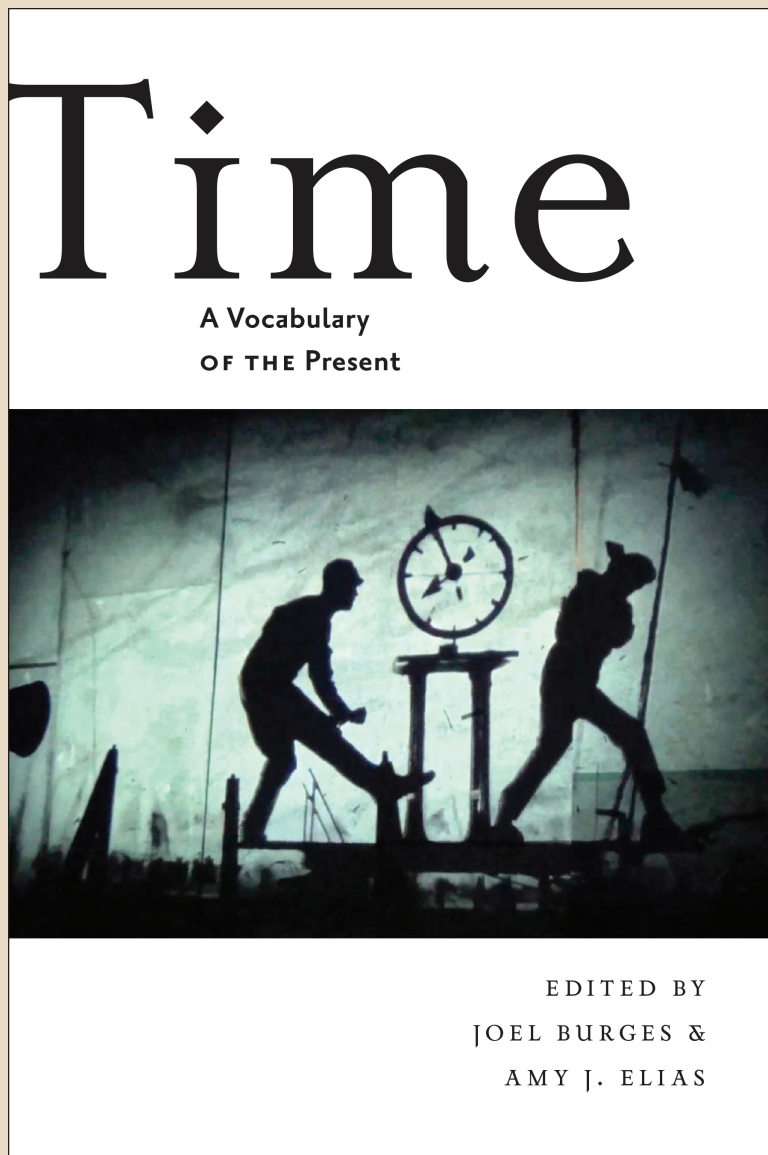


Time

A Vocabulary of the Present

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE



384 PAGES • PAPER
978-1-4798-7484-2

Why Consider this Book for Your Class?

What is time, and what does it mean to us today? In this accessible study of contemporary views of time and its relation to culture, technology, art, and the planet, *Time: A Vocabulary of the Present*, edited by Joel Burges and Amy Elias, offers readers a thorough introduction to Time Studies.

How do we (in our lived, real lives) make sense of concepts such as “emergency” or “obsolescence”? How do comic books evoke “simultaneous” time so effectively, and why is the Hollywood blockbuster so adept with “prosthetic” time?

Readers will gain a clearer understanding of the various stakes and stances of this scholarly field; they will also be able to observe how scholars in this developing area of study think through problems and oppositions. *Time: A Vocabulary of the Present* offers students valuable training in the framing and organization of complex ideas and the advancing of surprising, yet clear, premises.

“Arriving at a moment in which there is a need for new frameworks around temporality, historicity, and memory, Time offers a rich and beautiful mapping of the concept of ‘time,’ showing where we have come from in our thinking, but more importantly, where we are headed. A true intellectual gem.”

—Amir Eshel, author of *Futurity*

General Summary

The concept of time in the post-millennial age is undergoing a radical rethinking within the humanities. *Time: A Vocabulary of the Present* newly theorizes our experiences of time in relation to developments in post-1945 cultural theory and arts practices. Wide ranging and theoretically provocative, the volume introduces readers to cutting-edge temporal conceptualizations and investigates what exactly constitutes the scope of time studies.

Featuring twenty essays that reveal what we talk about when we talk about time today, especially in the areas of history, measurement, and culture, each essay pairs two keywords to explore the tension and nuances between them, from “past/future” and “anticipation/unexpected” to “extinction/adaptation” and “serial/simultaneous.” Moving beyond the truisms of postmodernism, the collection newly theorizes the meanings of temporality in relationship to aesthetic, cultural, technological, and economic developments in the postwar period. This book thus assumes that time—not space, as the postmoderns had it—is central to the contemporary period, and that through it we can come to terms with what contemporaneity can be for human beings caught up in the historical present. In the end, *Time* reveals that the present is a cultural matrix in which overlapping temporalities condition and compete for our attention. Thus each pair of terms presents two temporalities, yielding a generative account of the time, or times, in which we live.

Introduction

SUMMARY

The introduction outlines the central organizing principle of this collection of essays: Each scholar is responding to a pair of keywords connected to time and temporality. Using the example of Christian Marclay's installation *The Clock*, Elias and Burges pose a series of questions about time and its role in our late-capitalist society, deploying Marclay's artwork to reveal fractures and complications in differing scholarly views of time, post-modernism, affect, and the contemporary period.

The introduction also offers brief summaries of each of the collection's essays, not only outlining the concerns and arguments presented by each writer, but also hinting at connections and disagreements within the three sections of this book.

Part 1: Time as History

“Past / Future” by Amy Elias

SUMMARY

Elias opens this collection with a troubling vision of our perception of the past, present, and future. Contrasting our current moment with the medieval sense of apocalypse and prophecy and with the Enlightenment belief in utopia and agency, Elias argues that we are living in a “cacophony of noise and color and movement,” a “techno-duration” that seems to leave us powerless at the same time as it “spreads out like tsunami waters over the past.” In such a moment, the past becomes “retro-futurism,” an unconnected series of obsolete, failed futures, and the future becomes “slip-stream,” the experience of being pulled helplessly by inhuman forces into an unknowable tomorrow.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- How does the present-day conception of time mark a kind of return to medieval conceptions of apocalyptic time?
- According to Elias, why is techno-duration not empowering?
- What makes the future, when envisaged as “slipstream,” so frightening and alienating?
- What are some of the ways that imaginative literature offers a critique of present-day capitalism?

Part 1: Time as History

“Extinction / Adaptation” by Ursula K. Heise

SUMMARY

Heise’s article contrasts different historical views of extinction and evolutionary change. She describes some of the complexities in how present-day “environmentalist discourse” talks about extinctions, and how such visions help to cement a view of “the present as a time of lost diversity and abundance, of scarcity, of limits.” The essay then considers more hopeful interpretations of ecological change, both unexpected adaptations and lab-grown “de-extinctions” made possible by science. Heise points out the possibilities involved in such rebirths as well as their “surrealist” qualities, questioning exactly what practical or “ethical” problem these renewed species are intended to solve.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ➔ What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- ➔ How does the more optimistic view of extinction, popular in the 19th century, contrast with our own?
- ➔ How have contemporary authors imagined scenes of re-animation and de-extinction?
- ➔ How do language extinctions resemble the extinctions of species?

Part 1: Time as History

“Modern / Altermodern” by David James

SUMMARY

James presents the current debate about the ongoing life and legacy of modernism. He investigates the ever-popular use, in scholarly arguments, of artistic and historical periods. He questions, on the one hand, the validity of a term like “modernism,” while, on the other, marveling at its unusual longevity, its ability to “linger when temporalities morph.” He presents differing views of our contemporary period’s relationship to modernism and offers versions of modernism untethered from the historical events of the early twentieth century.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- Why has “modernism,” as a critical concept, endured so long?
- What are some of the limitations of periodization, according to James?
- What would a “contemporary” modernism, one that was distinct from the modernist artists of the early twentieth century (Joyce, Picasso, Woolf, etc.), look like?

Part 1: Time as History

“Obsolescence / Innovation” by Joel Burges

SUMMARY

Burges argues that obsolescence and innovation are not merely features of our current industrial economy, but rather comprise “a rhythmical experience of historical time,” “a horizon of authentically historical experience.” Obsolescence seems involved in the increasing reduction of history’s significance in late capitalist society, but also, paradoxically, the means by which the past seems forever to be “constantly accumulating” and by which capitalism makes itself seem only more and more necessary to human life. Burges concludes with artistic visions of obsolescence that center on human obsolescence, the worker deemed no longer necessary to his or her field.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ➔ What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- ➔ How did “planned obsolescence” become a commonly understood term?
- ➔ What is the difference, presented in the essay, between true innovation and “zeitgeist”?
- ➔ How do obsolescent products help us to form a sense of time?

Part 1: Time as History

“Anticipation / Unexpected” by Mark Currie

SUMMARY

Currie investigates time-related terms that “have straightforward denotations in everyday life” and yet also have carefully specific meanings in “philosophy and theory,” suggesting that this double-meaning gives terms such as “anticipation” an “emergent” quality. He contrasts St. Augustine’s view of anticipation with Derrida’s, building up a complex picture of how one might understand the present and its relation to the future.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- What does Currie mean by “emergent words”?
- What comparison is Currie presenting between Augustine and Derrida’s view of the present moment?
- How does Currie’s analysis of the “unexpected” shift into a discussion of “impossibility”?

Part 2: Time as Calculation

“Clock / Lived” by Jimena Canales

SUMMARY

Canales narrates the development of man-made “clock time” in human society, illustrating how it displaced other methods of keeping track of time. He also outlines approaches by historians such as Braudel to move beyond both lived and clock time, attempts to envision history “closer to the astronomical scales of earth and planetary sciences.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ➔ What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- ➔ How and when did clocks, according to Canales, supplant other, older methods of telling / making sense of time?
- ➔ How have some twentieth century historians (Braudel, Thompson) attempted to move “beyond” a focus on clock time?
- ➔ What, according to the essay, was Heidegger’s dissatisfaction with clock time?

Part 2: Time as Calculation

“Synchronic / Anachronic” by Elizabeth Freeman

SUMMARY

In an essay focused on questions of freedom and resistance, Freeman describes conditions of both synchrony and anachrony — acting together, acting apart — in art and everyday life. Freeman argues that “synchrony creates the social,” and while it may superficially seem connected to control and domination, it also offers hope for solidarity and collective, popular action.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- In what ways does “anachrony” offer a critique of modernity?
- How is it possible that Freeman’s examples of “synchrony” (X-Men, Occupy Wall Street) present instances of both domination and resistance?
- How does “synchrony” (and the technology that produces it) influence contemporary emotions and affect?

Part 2: Time as Calculation

“Human / Planetary” by Heather Houser

SUMMARY

Houser contrasts models and illustrations of the environment that reinforce human “narcissism” about our own time frame and significance and those that offer the possibility of thinking in broader, planetary scales and orders. How can “climate-change media” offer its viewers a sense of “the dance between human and planet” and explain our effect on the Earth without strengthening our self-important “personal continuum of human time”?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- How does “inhuman” time mediate between human-scale time and planetary-scale time?
- According to Houser, how does a footprint calculator “endorse” a human-centric understanding of time?
- What are some examples given in the essay of “disjunctions” / “sutures” in the images and models of climate change?

Part 2: Time as Calculation

“Serial / Simultaneous” by Jared Gardner

SUMMARY

Gardner contrasts what seems to be a natural way of viewing time — a “tensed,” ever-moving present — with the capacities of the comic strip form, which excels at presenting events in serial and simultaneous form. Referring to McGuire’s “Here” and to the parallel universes and multi-verses of superhero comics, Gardner outlines how contemporary art forms offer “the pleasures and rewards of imaginatively inhabiting a tenseless time.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- Why is 1905 the “annus mirabilis,” and how did it change our sense of time?
- What is the special relationship between comics, as a visual form, and “simultaneous” time?
- How does modern-day serial television offer “opportunities to straddle these two models of time”?

Part 2: Time as Calculation

“Emergency / Everyday” by Ben Anderson

SUMMARY

How does the concept of an “emergency” conflict with “the everyday?” Anderson suggests that while an emergency, on the surface, represents the suspension of the everyday, the two terms are in a real sense dependent on each other: “the everyday is made by the emergency... the moment of break makes perceptible, or even defines, what constituted continuity before it.” He then uses this observation to complicate the claims that other scholars have made for the everyday, ending with the possibility that the two experiences have, in practice, merged into one endlessly anxious moment.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ➔ What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- ➔ What is the relation of “emergency” to time and temporality?
- ➔ How does an “emergency” confirm the importance of the everyday?
- ➔ How did the “everyday” become a critique of post-1945 Western culture?

Part 2: Time as Calculation

“Labor / Leisure” by Aubrey Anable

SUMMARY

Despite utopian hopes for a world of leisure and freedom, in today's world, much of what passes for free time, Anable argues, is really work carried out in different forms. Digital media and mobile entertainment bring “to the foreground” in human life various forms of “immaterial labour,” work that does not necessarily produce anything physical. Anable explores, too, how mobile games such as Candy Crush Saga “construct our play” as a search for productivity.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- What was Keynes' prediction about universal leisure?
- How are social media and mobile gaming a form of “digital labor”?
- In what ways is “zaniness” both conducive and “destructive” to productivity?

Part 2: Time as Calculation

“Real / Quality” by Mark McGurl

SUMMARY

McGurl examines the origins of “real” and “quality” time. The first term arose from Cold War era computer programming, and the other from 1970s child-raising. Both concepts, although claiming a kind of vitality or authenticity connected to the present moment, also impinge on actual lived experiences. “The trouble with quality time,” McGurl remarks, “... is that it happens in real time.” Contemporary people are supposed to enjoy and make time for quality time in a world committed to “ceaseless economic production.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ➔ What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- ➔ Why can the terms “real time” and “quality time,” according to McGurl, not simply be dismissed “as clichés”?
- ➔ How does “quality time” as an ideal emerge out of theories of child-raising?
- ➔ In what ways does “quantity time” offer a challenge to capitalist views of time?

Part 3: Time as Culture

“Aesthetic / Prosthetic” by Jesse Matz

SUMMARY

Matz examines how art attempts to redeem time, to make it serve human ends. The modernists sought in their art “to create human time,” and this achievement “is a modernism that persists,” reappearing in contemporary Hollywood. Movies such as *Source Code* and *Limitless* present visions of an augmented experience of temporality, offering uncertain and ambiguous visions in which humans are able to enter a “posthuman possibility.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- How does modernist art attempt to solve the “crisis in time” caused by modernity?
- How is prosthetic time represented within the aesthetic time of movies such as *Limitless*?
- How does Matz express ambivalence about both the nostalgia of *Source Code* and the brazenness of *Limitless*?

Part 3: Time as Culture

“Analepsis / Prolepsis” by James Phelan

SUMMARY

The techniques of analepsis and prolepsis date back to *The Iliad*. Narrators have always flashed back to past events or claimed knowledge of the future. However, according to Phelan, contemporary literature displays a more troubled usage of these techniques. What once served to show the narrator’s mastery of time in works like *Beloved* and *The Crying of Lot 49* now reveals an uncertainty about the possibility of knowing either the future or the past.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ➔ What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- ➔ What uses do storytellers make of analepsis and prolepsis, according to Phelan?
- ➔ In what ways does contemporary fiction question our ability to know the past or future?

Part 3: Time as Culture

“Embodied / Disembodied” by Michelle Stephens and Sandra Stephens

SUMMARY

Stephens and Stephens present frameworks for understanding “an experience of the self as temporal,” a “disembodied” body who “evades ideology.” They argue that a decolonial art works to take “back apart the impermeable, static body” and seeks ways to represent the body in “time, as well as space.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- How was Conceptual art a response to “formalism?”
- How did the European sense of the body change during the transition from Medieval to Enlightenment?
- What might a “decolonial” body look like?

Part 3: Time as Culture

“Theological / Worldly” by Stanley Haurwas

SUMMARY

Christians are often inclined, Haurwas suggests, to ground their faith in a belief in eternity, in “other-worldly time.” He argues that this empties out much of the specificity and power of Christianity. “We are of a faith,” says Haurwas, “that depends on the presumption that events have occurred that have changed the world.” Discussing the ideas of Barth, Yoder, and Augustine, Haurwas encourages us to escape the “stalled present that undermines a sense of social justice predicated on forward movement, action, future.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ➔ What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- ➔ What is the conflict for Christians, according to Haurwas, between the “eternal” and time “in history”?
- ➔ Why should God not be “timeless”?
- ➔ Why was Augustine’s understanding of time so revolutionary?

Part 3: Time as Culture

“Authentic / Artificial” by Anthony Reed

SUMMARY

The label of “authenticity,” Reed suggests, leave many African American artists and art forms suffering as a “remote, isolated Other,” marooned in an imagined space and time, a “racialized spatiotemporal schema” that is separate from and distant to modernity. Such artists are applauded for their authenticity but forbidden the opportunity to fully participate in the world of their listeners. Reed concludes by suggesting that “semblance” and “reproducibility” present a possible way out of this bind.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- How does Reed offer a critique of the “authentic”?
- In what ways does “primitive” art require its creators to be isolated from modernity?
- How might the concept of “resemblance” offer us a way out of these divides?

Part 3: Time as Culture

“Batch / Interactive” by Nick Montfort

SUMMARY

Montfort describes the development of interactive programming, stressing the early significance in theories of computing of the possible “symbiosis” of person and device. These premises have evolved to the point where people are discussed with terms such as “multi-tasking” that were originally intended for computers, and the question of whether the human sense of time will become increasingly “computer-centric” is not yet possible to answer.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- How did iterative programming change computers?
- What are some of the early predictions of how a computer-dominated world might look?
- How did interactive programming affect the role of men and women in computing?

Part 3: Time as Culture

“Transmission / Influence” by Rachel Haidu

SUMMARY

Haidu presents the idea of “transmission” as an alternative to artistic “influence.” Transmission describes the “real-time” encounter of one artist with the art of another’s, accepting “the public or quasi-public, historico-temporal nature of the work’s appeal to multiple audiences.” Influence, in contrast, focuses on a relationship between artists occurring in “a historical vacuum and an absence of sociality.” Transmission, Haidu suggests, brings back a sense of corporality and temporality to the engendering of one artwork by another (attributes that the more refined “influence” suppresses).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- Why does Haidu suggest that “transmission” occurs in “real time”?
- What is Haidu’s critique of Harold Bloom?
- How does “influence” challenge our sense of the “self”?

Part 3: Time as Culture

“Silence / Beat” by Paul D. Miller, AKA DJ Spooky

SUMMARY

Miller discusses the insights and mysteries surrounding Pythagoras and his theories of music’s connection to number, suggesting that “number” is an increasingly central component of how life is represented in art. Citing bands such as Kraftwerk and the Wu-Tang Clan, Miller proposes several ways in which Pythagorean stress on the numbers is being developed in contemporary art.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ➔ What is the conception of time presented in this essay?
- ➔ What are some of the mysteries about Pythagoras outlined by Miller?
- ➔ How does Miller encourage the reader to think in terms of samples and mash-ups?
- ➔ What is the relation of numbers to contemporary music?