

Beyond the Clock: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Time

Nanyang Technological University
Humanities and Social Sciences Building
March 15-16, 2019

Friday, March 15

9:00 – 10:00	Registration and Welcome
10:00 – 11:00	Keynote Speaker: Stephen Kern (The Ohio State University)
11:00 – 12:30	Panel 1: Marking Time Lines
	Panel 2: Economies of Time
12:30 – 2:00	Lunch
2:00 – 3:30	Panel 3: Time and Ethnography
	Panel 4: Time and the National Imagination
3:30 – 4:00	Tea Break
4:00 – 5:30	Panel 5: Temporalities of Pain and Healing
	Panel 6: Structures of Literary Time

Saturday, March 16

10:00 – 11:00	Keynote Speaker: Alexis McCrossen (Southern Methodist University)
11:00 – 12:30	Panel 7: Sanctified Time
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 2:30	The Times of Art in Singapore: Alfian Sa'at and Yanyun Chen in conversation with Shaoling Ma
2:30 – 4:00	Panel 8: Chronopolitics
	Panel 9: Malleable Time and the Literary Work
4:00 – 4:30	Tea Break
4:30 – 5:30	Keynote Speaker: Jimena Canales (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)
6:00 – 8:00	Conference Dinner

Detailed Schedule for Day 1 (March 15)

Keynote Speaker 1: Stephen Kern (The Ohio State University)

Chair: Kevin Riordan (Nanyang Technological University)

The Culture of Time and Space: A Hundred Years Later (HSS 05-57)

This talk surveys changing ideas about the number and texture of times between two historical periods a century apart: the years 1890-1930 and 1980 and the present. In the earlier period thinking divided between time's number as one or many and its texture as atomistic or a flux. In the later period these pairings expanded considerably. I explain these changes from developments in culture and the arts, physics and biology, and new information and communication technologies. At the end of each section I discuss a novel from the later period that captures these changes in historically distinctive ways: Alan Lightman's *Einstein's Clocks* for time's number and Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* for time's texture. This talk is part of the first chapter of a book I am writing on changing ideas about time and space across these years. Its overall argument is that new ICTs changed the scales of experience with time viewed as more numerous, textured, achronological, extended (into the past and future), potent, retrievable, simultaneous, thicker, and accelerated. Another explanation of these changes in time as well as space derives from the declining persuasiveness of Judeo-Christian ideas about time as well as space in an increasingly secular era.

Panel 1. Marking Time Lines (HSS 03-94)

Chair: Stuart Strange (Yale-NUS College)

Grace Teo (Nanyang Technological University), "Out of Sync: Saving Daylight in Colonial Singapore, 1930s"

Ray Tiquia (University of Melbourne), "Performing Knowledge Traditions in Accordance with the Transnational Stems and Branches Calendrical Clock (Southern and Northern Hemispheres)"

Kevin Riordan (Nanyang Technological University), "Oceanic Time and the Writing of the Date Line"

Panel 2. Economies of Time (HSS 04-71)

Chair: Gabriele Koch (Yale-NUS College)

Aaron Su (Columbia University), “Two Lineages: The Question of Value in the Political Economy of Time”

Filip Vostal (Czech Academy of Sciences), “Maintaining Beamtime: An Initial Framework”

Evelyn Wan (Tilburg University), “Performing Rhythms of Labour: Biopower and Algorithmic Mediations of Time”

Panel 3. Time and Ethnography (HSS 03-94)

Chair: Ian Rowen (Nanyang Technological University)

Sabina Vakser (Independent Scholar), “‘Stuck in This Time Warp’: The Role of Narrative in Depictions of Migrant Temporal Experience”

Nicolas Lainez (Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Enjeux Sociaux), “Treading Water: Street Sex Workers Negotiating Frantic Presents and Speculative Futures in the Mekong Delta”

Young Su Park (Freie Universität Berlin), “Tempoethics: Discordant Temporalities of the State and the Family in the Korean Global Health Project in Ethiopia”

Panel 4. Time and the National Imagination (HSS 04-71)

Chair: Michelle Chiang (Nanyang Technological University)

Charlotte Hand (Nanyang Technological University), “‘Her Life Ran Like Clock-Work’: Time, Womanhood, and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century America”

Sugata Nandi (West Bengal State University), “Timeless India: Magic and Colonial Modernization”

Christopher Trigg (Nanyang Technological University), “Secular Millennialism and the Rhetoric of Religious Difference”

Panel 5. Temporalities of Pain and Healing (HSS 03-94)

Chair: Michael Stanley-Baker (Nanyang Technological University)

Céline Coderey (Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore), “We Are Made of Time: Time, Health, and Healing Practices in Myanmar”

Suzanne Fraser (Curtin University), “Beyond the Twin Hurricanes: Addiction and the Temporal Politics of Habit”

Shagufta Kaur Bhangu (Shiv Nadar University), “Chronic Pain: Time & Inscriptions”

Panel 6. Structures of Literary Time (HSS 04-71)

Chair: Neil Murphy (Nanyang Technological University)

Jeannette Pang (Nanyang Technological University), “Narratives of a Temporality: Mythic Structure and Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*”

Gi Taek Ryoo (Chungbuk National University), “Time Is Change: ‘Rediscovery of Time’ in Eliot and Prigogine”

Ivan Stacy (Zhejiang University), “The Carnival Is Over: Time and Transgression in W. G. Sebald”

Detailed Schedule for Day 2 (March 16)

Keynote Speaker 2: Alexis McCrossen (Southern Methodist University)

Chair: Justin Clark (Nanyang Technological University)

The Countdown (HSS 05-57)

The countdown, which only entered popular usage after the Second World War, is perhaps the ultimate manifestation of clock time as at once compressed and dilated. It entered popular usage after the 1953 live television broadcast of an atomic bomb test at Yucca Flat, Nevada. Further bomb tests and rocket launches entrenched its salience. By the end of the 1950s what I have identified as a “countdown mentality” suffused American culture. In one iteration it signified depletion, in another fulfillment; in one, end times, in the other eternity. Perhaps the countdown mentality’s most dramatic invocation was in the controversial 1964 “Daisy” political advertisement for American Presidential candidate Lyndon Baines Johnson, in which a young girl erratically counts down to the detonation of an atomic bomb. But its most enduring form is in the annual New Year’s Eve ball drop in New York City’s Times Square. Broadcast over radio, television, and the internet, the December 31 countdown to midnight is an iconic part of American, if not global, temporal culture. This talk explores the countdown mentality from historical and theoretical perspectives, looking in particular at its militaristic origins, its early popular usages, and its ritualized New Year’s form.

Panel 7. Sanctified Time (HSS 05-57)

Chair: Christopher Trigg (Nanyang Technological University)

Nazry Bahrawi (Singapore University of Technology and Design), “The Hajj as Utopia: Theology, Time, and Travel”

Lexi Eikelboom (Australian Catholic University), “World Without End: Eternity in a Networked Society”

David Zvi Kalman (University of Pennsylvania), “Time, Progress, and the American Sabbath”

Special Session: The Times of Art in Singapore (HSS 05-57)

Alfian Sa’at (Resident Playwright, W!LD RICE)

Yanyun Chen (Lecturer in Arts Practice, Yale-NUS College)

Chair: Shaoling Ma (Yale-NUS College)

Panel 8. Chronopolitics (HSS 04-71)

Chair: Céline Coderey (Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore)

Justin Clark (Nanyang Technological University), “The Speed of Communication: Professional Status and Clerical Labor in the United States, 1880-1920”

Juno Hoay-Fern (University of Malaya), “Architecture as Political Spectre: The Ghosts of Future Past in Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak (KOMTAR)”

Panel 9. Malleable Time and the Literary Work (HSS 03-94)

Chair: Geoff Baker (Yale-NUS College)

Divya A (Indian Institute of Technology Madras), “‘Time the Shadow... and weak the verse’? Tracing Time-space Trajectories in Toru Dutt’s ‘Our Casuarina Tree’ (1881)”

Michelle Chiang (Nanyang Technological University), “Beckett, Albee, and the Time of the Absurd”

Arin Fong (Nanyang Technological University), “Tenuous Times and Unstable Minds: Unnatural Temporality in Kevin Martens Wong’s *Altered Straits*”

Keynote Speaker 3 : Jimena Canales (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

Chair: Hallam Stevens (Nanyang Technological University)

The Trouble with Einstein’s Time (HSS 05-57)

An increasing number of contemporary physicists accept that there “a hole at the heart of physics” (Scientific American, 2002) pertaining to theories of time. The problem is usually traced back to how time is defined by Einstein’s theory of relativity and related to the notion of a “block universe.” Einstein’s famous claim that “the distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion” is espoused by some physicists, while many others are unwilling to write off our experience of emergent temporality from our understanding of the universe. Can these debates be solved by science alone or are they inescapably philosophical, historical and cultural? My talk will explore the origins of this persistent quandary by focusing on the relation of physics to philosophy, history and the humanities. Can we solve the problem of time without engaging in another “Science Wars”?