Presentists face a challenge from truthmaker theory: if you hold both that the only existing objects are presently existing and that truth depends on reality, then you will be hard pressed to identify some existent on which a given true but traceless claim about the past depends. We’ll build up to an assessment of this objection and, in doing so, introduce several of the most discussed topics in recent metaphysics, including ontological dependence, time, necessity and dispositions.

Texts

• several required readings available online through the Google Group F12-PHIL-400-LEC-A1

Assessment

The course is a seminar. Participation is crucial both for the seminar to go well and for you to benefit from the seminar. Preparation through doing the assigned reading before each meeting is, in turn, important for being able to participate. Although dense, the reading will be of an average number of pages for a seminar.

• **Participation** is worth 1/4th of the final grade. A required short **weekly email**, sent to the class Google Group, asking a substantive question or identifying a problem you’ve had on the weekly reading, is due **Wednesday Noon** before each class. Each participant will give a **short presentation**, on a schedule to be arranged. The participation grade is based on the weekly papers, presentation and active participation in discussion.

• A 8-12 pg. double-spaced **term paper**, worth 3/4 of the final grade, due in the Philosophy Department office on or before **2 PM December 12**, Assiniboia 2-40. A promising strategy here is to present, explain and assess an argument in a reading other than the required readings, such as one of the suggested further readings, listed below. In the interests of fairness, I can’t read drafts but please come talk to me about your topic. Late papers will not be accepted without a documented medical excuse.

Prereq’s

Like any 400-level course, the prerequisite for the course is “successful completion of 6 units of course weight in Philosophy, including a 200-level course.” However, highly recommended background for this course is a metaphysics survey, such as PHIL 200 at the University of Alberta.
Policy
Of course, all work must be your own and all sources must be clearly cited. But plagiarism isn’t just quoting stuff without citation. If the thought expressed by your sentence isn’t your own, you must say who conveyed that thought to you. And don’t rely on web sources; most of them suck. The University of Alberta asks me to tell you that it “is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. Policy about course outlines can be found in § 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.”

Detailed Bibliography (subject to revision)

September 12 Truthmaker Theory
Required
Merricks chapters 1, 2
Suggested Further Reading
Armstrong, D. 2004 Truth and Truthmakers. Cambridge, chapters 1, 2

September 19 Negative Existentials
Required
Merricks chapter 3
Suggested Further Reading
Armstrong chapter 5

September 26 Truth Supervenes on Being
Required
Merricks chapter 4
Suggested Further Reading

October 3 Supervenience, Grounding and Ontological Dependence
Required
Suggested Further Reading

**October 10** No Classes

**October 17 McTaggart and Eternalism**

Required


Mellor, D. “The Unreality of Tense” in Poidevin and MacBeath.

Suggested Further Reading

Loux, M. *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*. Part IV

**October 24 Presentism**

Required


Suggested Further Reading

Prior, “The Notion of the Present” in Loux.


**October 31 Truthmaker Objection to Presentism**

Required

Merricks chapter 6.

Suggested Further Reading


**November 7 Presentism and Distributional Properties**

Required


Suggested Further Reading


November 14 Modality
Required
Merricks chapter 5
Suggested Further Reading
Armstrong chapters 7 and 8
Loux, Part V

November 21 Conditionals
Required
Merricks chapter 7

November 28 Truthmakers and Correspondence Theory of Truth
Required
Merricks chapter 8

December 5 Buffer