

# Quest 2: On the nature of time and being: an astrophysics-informed approach to the big questions

Primary General Education Designation: Physical Sciences

Secondary General Education Designation: International

## I. Course Information

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Quest 2 IDS2935, Spring 2023

Meeting Day/Time: Tuesday period 3 (9:35 am - 10:25 am), Thursday periods 3 and 4 (9:35 am - 11:15 am)

Location: Tuesday: Mat 0117, Thursday: Anderson 0021

General Education Designation: [Physical Sciences, International, WR 2,000]

\* A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit \*

### **Instructor**

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:30-11:30 AM or by appointment (email me for latter).

302 Bryant Space Science Center

### **Course Description**

**What is the nature of time? What is the nature of space (and space-time)? And *where do we fit in?***

These are hard questions, and this course will not offer final answers. Rather, in this course we will acquire the tools and language to think critically about these questions. We will thoroughly investigate some of the most interesting topics in contemporary physics— the arrow of time, irreversibility, quantum mechanics, cosmology—through the lens of these big questions. Throughout, we will attack these areas via many different channels. This class should be accessible to non-physics majors—indeed, to those with minimal technical background at all—so we will focus on the concepts, exploring the key ideas with almost no math. At the same time, we will mix in ideas from philosophy, history, and art that also bear on these questions. This will make the course relevant and exciting both for those who feel a strong affinity with the arts and humanities as well as for those for whom science resonates

more.

Importantly, the course will also expose what the scientific method is and how science has been shaped by broader currents in history, culture, and philosophy, and in turn, how it has shaped them. This delicate dance, of science and art, philosophy and physics, scientist and his or her time, is chock-full of thought-provoking narratives that also reveal a broader message. We will explore not only historical narratives, but also how this history has shaped our world today. We will also analyze how the same patterns can be seen playing out in contemporary society—that the delicate dance of science and art, philosophy and physics, social context and scientist, continues now.

Finally, the course will have a strongly contemporary, intercultural inflection. In particular, we will investigate three themes that anchor the course in our modern, multicultural world. First, how has technology in the present day shaped our relationship to and conception of time and space? Second, how has contemporary art from a variety of cultures responded to scientific ideas regarding time and space? And third, how do different cultures today conceptualize time and space, and how does this dialog with and complicate our scientific notions of time and space?

## **Required & Recommended Course Materials (to purchase/rent)**

### **Required**

There will be a few required books to be read in whole, and the rest of the readings will be in a Course Reader made up of excerpts. Below are listed the required texts to be bought in whole, and then under a separate heading the excerpts to go in the Course Reader.

#### **In full**

Lightman, A., “Einstein’s Dreams”, New York: Vintage Press, 2004.

#### **Some are short articles, some are excerpts; all will be put on Canvas as needed.**

Hume, D. “An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,” 2nd edition, ed. Eric Steinberg. Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1993. (excerpt~10 pages)

**\*\*\*Best to purchase the full Hume if possible.**

Weinberg, S. “Anthropic Bound on the Cosmological Constant,” Physical Review Letters 59, 2607, 1987. (short article).

Peacock, J. “The Anthropic Principle in Cosmology,” 1999. (short article).

Mosterin, J., “Anthropic Explanations in Cosmology,” 2004. (short article).

Einstein, A., 1905, “On the electrodynamics of moving bodies” (will read excerpts only; this is a translation of the original article presenting special relativity, “Zur Elektrodynamik bewegter Körper,” in Annalen der Physik. 17:891, 1905) (short article).

Hesiod, “Theogony” (excerpts).

Nietzsche, F. “The Gay Science”, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

Nehamas, A. “Nietzsche: Life as Literature”, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Wallace, D., "The Arrow of Time in Physics", 2012, in the Blackwell Companion to the Philosophy of Time (short article).

Brown, H. and Uffink, J., "The Origins of Time Asymmetry in Thermodynamics: The Minus-First Law", in Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part B: Studies in History and Philosophy of Modern Physics 32 (4):525-538 (also available online). (short article).

Hubble, E., "A Relation between Distance and Radial Velocity among Extra-Galactic Nebulae," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, vol. 15, Issue 3, pp. 168-173, 1929. (short article).

*Lemaitre, G., "Un Univers homogène de masse constante et de rayon croissant rendant compte de la vitesse radiale des nébuleuses extra-galactiques," Annales de la Société Scientifique de Bruxelles, A47, pp. 49-59, 1927. (short article, translated).*

Price, H. (2004). "Why there is still a puzzle about the low-entropy past?" In C. Hitchcock (Ed.), Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Science, pp. 219-239. Oxford: Blackwell. (short article).

Callender, C., "Thermodynamic Asymmetry in Time", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). (short article).

Chang, H. "Operationalism", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2009/entries/operationalism/>. (short article).

Bridgman, P. "The Logic of Modern Physics," New York: MacMillan, 1927. (excerpt).

Franklin, B. "Experiments and Observations on Electricity," St. John's Gate: 1751. (excerpt).

Norton, John D., "The Hole Argument", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/spacetime-holearg/> (short article).

Stachel, J. "The Hole Argument and Some Physical and Philosophical Implications," (2014), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.12942/lrr-2014-1> (short article).

## For Reference

Ostlie C. and Carroll B., "An Introduction to Modern Astrophysics", San Francisco: Pearson. Addison-Wesley, 2007.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online), (<https://plato.stanford.edu/about.html#desc>).

Ryden, B. "Introduction to Cosmology," 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

## Recommended Materials

"The Chicago Manual of Style," 17th ed. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2017.

Strunk, O. and White, E.B., "The Elements of Style," 4th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000.

## Statement on Materials and Supplies Fees

n/a

## II. Coursework & Schedule

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### 1. List of Graded Work

*Assignments are summarized below. Detailed prompts for each assignment will be posted on Canvas under Assignments.*

Work	Description	Word Count	Points
Clock Talk	Present 2-3 slides on a time-keeping technology and how it works.	n/a	10
Journal entry	Keep a journal for the week on how you interact with time and timekeeping devices throughout the day..	500	10
Time "13 Ways" poem	Details will be presented in class	n/a	15
Marked essay: on Hume and causation	A polished, 2 page essay that concisely outlines Hume's ideas on causation and addresses the questions posed under in the prompt.	500	7 for initial draft, 8 for revision = 15 total
Marked essay: on statistical mechanics and arrow of time	A polished, 2 page essay that concisely addresses the prompt. Same requirements on formatting as previous essay, and same scoring.	500	7 for initial draft, 8 for revision = 15 total

Class participation	Are you an active, engaged learner in class discussions? See Participation Grading Rubric for more details.	n/a	20
Take Home Final Exam	2 options: prompts are online.	500	15

## 2. Weekly Course Schedule

Week/ Date	Topic Area/Objectives/Assignments  (work listed in X week is due via Canvas/in class the following week)
Week 1/2	<p>Overview of fundamental questions for the course: What is time? What is space? Where do we stand in both? -and why they matter: causation requires notion of time; many cultures' search for meaning (will discuss examples) involves a story about the Universe's origins (cosmogony) and their place in it.</p> <p>-we are all subjects to the laws of physics and the passage of time: these shape what it means to be human. Overview of approach: meld science, philosophy, history, art to attack these questions.</p> <p><i>Readings: Hume's "Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" (excerpts), Hesiod's Theogony (excerpts)–online.</i></p>
Week 3	<p>How do we define time? How do we measure it? History of science-focused outline of development of human technologies for measuring time and their links to the science of their time -How do we measure time now? (atomic clocks–will seed discussion of quantum mechanics later in the term) Historical connection: importance of time to navigation, the development of mercantile systems in the Renaissance and early Enlightenment, voyages of discovery (and colonization): Galileo's ship and the moons of Jupiter -how GPS works in the modern day (will connect to later discussion of General Relativity)</p> <p>Short poem: Two 13 ways poem on subjective perception of time and views of and roles for time in contemporary society.</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> <i>Wallace Stevens "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" to support writing a 13 ways poem on time.</i></p>

Week/ Date	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Topic Area/Objectives/Assignments</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(work listed in X week is due via Canvas/in class the following week)</p>
Week 3/4	<p>Operationalism: only what can be measured is “real”-lecture outlining this movement in philosophy of science            -Question this will raise: how do we define “real”? Is “scientifically measurable” exactly equivalent to “real”?</p> <p>-connection to Einstein’s work            -link to Karl Popper’s criterion of “falsifiability”            -compare and contrast with Occam’s razor as a criterion for scientific explanation</p> <p>Class debate: must all things that are “real” be measurable by physical means?</p> <p><i>Readings: Percy Bridgman, “The Logic of Modern Physics” (excerpts), “Operationalism” article in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online).</i></p>
Week 5	<p>Einstein’s special relativity: space, time, and spacetime            -where did Einstein’s idea come from? Previous experiments on speed of light (Bradley, aberration of light, Michelson-Morley)            -connection to operationalism: Einstein &amp; the trains of Bern            -time in the patent office            -Mach’s principle: an attempt to place the Newtonian idea of inertia on solid ground (seeding a question for further consideration in week 6)            -present the theory of special relativity</p> <p><i>Readings: on Special Relativity, Bradley, MM experiments, Mach’s principle</i></p>
Week 6	<p>Why is time different from space?            -time travel is impossible; space travel is not.            -discussion of time travel; closed timelike curves.            -infinity of space and time? are both infinite?            -connection of finite age of Universe to finite size of observable Universe - spacetime diagrams</p>

Week/ Date	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Topic Area/Objectives/Assignments</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(work listed in X week is due via Canvas/in class the following week)</p>
Week 6/7	<p>Einstein's Inertia and Newton's World: Reversibility 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-further investigate the Newtonian way of thinking that Einstein began with -Idea of inertia, requirement for a reference frame to define it; Mach's principle, returning to week 4</li> <li>-looking backwards in time, return to Galileo's ship (from week 1)</li> <li>-mechanical reversibility in Newton's laws</li> <li>-determinism; implications for free will?</li> <li>-the ultimate culmination of this: Poincare's recurrence</li> <li>-connection to the philosopher Nietzsche's idea of the "eternal recurrence"</li> </ul> <p>Class debate: if you had to live your life over, could it be any different? Could you change just one thing without changing the rest? What does Newtonian mechanics actually mean for this?</p> <p><i>Readings: Nietzsche, "The Gay Science," Nehamas, "Life as Literature" (excerpts).</i></p>
Week 7	
Week 8	<p>The Romantic Era in Science: Carnot and his Engine—Heat Death and the Death of Boltzmann</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-begin with Fourier (late 1700s) and the heat problem, to motivate transition from Enlightenment-era to Romantic-era science</li> <li>-connection of Carnot to his Napoleonic-era historical context (French engineering and artillery academies)</li> <li>-Carnot engine and the development of thermodynamics</li> <li>-from thermodynamics to statistical mechanics: Boltzmann, the H-theorem (growth of entropy), irreversibility and his suicide</li> <li>-connection to American science of that era: Josiah Willard Gibbs</li> <li>-Boltzmann brains and the past hypothesis</li> <li>-implications for the scientific endeavor and the connection of data to laws of nature</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings: from Price, Brown, and Callender works on reading list (in course packet); from Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.</i></p>
Week 9	<p>Irreversibility 2: Wave Function Collapse and the Quantum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-basic overview of relevant principles of quantum mechanics</li> <li>-breakdown of predictability and reversibility</li> <li>-key question: what is the relationship between predictability and reversibility? - does quantum mechanics have implications for free will that run counter to Newtonian mechanics? determinism?</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings: from Price and Callender works on reading list.</i></p>



Week/ Date	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Topic Area/Objectives/Assignments</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(work listed in X week is due via Canvas/in class the following week)</p>
Week 10	<p>Einstein's General Relativity and the Basics of Cosmology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mach's principle: a return to the question of inertia</li> <li>-experimental tests of GR (solar eclipse in 1919, Shapiro time delay in 1964)</li> <li>-the expanding Universe: Lemaitre's 1927 work on expanding solutions to Einstein's equations, Hubble's 1929 discovery and further developments, Einstein's "greatest blunder"</li> <li>-Dark energy</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings: from Ryden "Introduction to Cosmology", original articles by Hubble, by Shapiro, readings on dark energy TBD.</i></p>
Week 11	<p>The cosmological arrow of time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-connection of GR back to thermodynamics and statistical mechanics ideas presented in week 8</li> <li>-why does the Universe on the largest scales seem to have an arrow of time? yet gravity itself is time-reversible?</li> <li>-discussion of structure formation in the Universe</li> </ul> <p>Experiential learning: use public data from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey to explore the development of clustering of galaxies in the Universe as cosmic time progresses.</p> <p>Modern-day cosmology: dark energy, anthropic reasoning Key questions: what is dark energy? Why do we think it's there? Do you think anthropic reasoning is *logically* valid? Even if so, does it fall within the domain of *science*? Is it a productive line of reasoning for future scientific discovery?</p> <p><i>Readings: Wallace "The Arrow of Time in Physics."</i></p>
Week 12	<p>Is space-time real?</p> <p>Key questions: Does Newtonian mechanics require it to be a real "substance"? Does General Relativity? Should dark energy influence our thinking about this, and if so, how?</p> <p>Beginnings: initial conditions of the Universe, and inflation.</p> <p>Origin of baryons (regular matter).</p> <p>Key questions: how does this connect to the emergence of time-asymmetry in the Universe? Does it explain it, or does it already *require or assume* it? What caused the initial conditions, and is this a well-posed question?</p>

# III. Grading

## 3. Statement on Attendance and Participation

### Attendance and Participation:

Class attendance is expected. Each unexcused absence will result in a reduction in the final grade. Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) and require appropriate documentation.

Students who can demonstrate that they were unable to submit an assignment by the deadline due to an excused absence and who can provide appropriate documentation for the absence will be given a reasonable period of time to make up the late work.

- **Attendance:** will be taken daily. You are allowed to miss 2 class periods for the semester, after which each absences that does not meet university criteria for “excused” will result in a two point deduction from your final grade.
- **Participation:** Consistent informed, thoughtful, and considerate class participation is expected and will be evaluated using the rubric below.
- **NOTE:** If you have personal issues that prohibit you from joining freely in class discussion, e.g., shyness, language barriers, etc., see the instructor as soon as possible to discuss alternative modes of participation.

### Participation Grading Rubric:

	High Quality	Average	Needs Improvement
Informed: Shows evidence of having done the assigned work.	6.66	4	2
Thoughtful: Shows evidence of having understood and considered issues raised.	6.66	4	2
Considerate: Takes the perspective others into account.	6.66	4	2

### 3a. WR Statements and Grading Rubric

- The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

- WR Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.
- *The WR designation will be satisfied by several marked formal writing assignments throughout the term, totaling 2,000 words. We will learn from excellent examples of expository writing through the class readings, and feedback will come both through multiple drafts marked by the instructors and through peer review and editing.*

### Writing Assessment Rubric

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
<b>CONTENT</b>	Papers exhibit at least some evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide at least an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off-topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
<b>ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE</b>	Documents and paragraphs exhibit at least some identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement but may require readers to work to follow progression of ideas.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.
<b>ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT</b>	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.
<b>STYLE</b>	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical sentence structure. At a minimum, documents will display a less precise use of vocabulary and an uneven use of sentence structure or a writing style that occasionally veers away from word choice or tone appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.

<b>MECHANICS</b>	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, papers may contain some spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive so they do not muddy the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.
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## 4. Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

A	94 - 100% of possible points		C	74 - 76%
A-	90 - 93%		C-	70 - 73%
B+	87 - 89%		D+	67 - 69%
B	84 - 86%		D	64 - 66%
B-	80 - 83%		D-	60 - 63%
C+	77 - 79%		F	<60

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## IV. Quest Learning Experiences

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### 5. Course Delivery and Engagement

Number of Seats Anticipated:   35  

Delivery Method:   classroom  

This course will engage students through a variety of learning modalities. Some of the course will be delivered as lectures using both powerpoint and a chalkboard; some will involve class discussions. There will be recorded music used in the class where appropriate (see week by week) as well as a mandatory visit to the Harn Art Museum.

## **6. Details of Experiential Learning Component**

Experiential learning: possible visit to Harn museum; various class presentations and debates.

## **7. Details of Self-Reflection Component**

Week 2 Journal: Keep a journal for the week on how you interact with time and timekeeping devices throughout the day. Journal should be roughly 2 paragraphs per day, and polished in writing style; will be graded and feedback given. Will also be circulated in a small group of peers for discussion in class.

There is also a poem about perceptions of time (ungraded) and a space-time diagram (graded) that will provide additional opportunities for self-reflection.

## **8. What is the essential/pressing question your course explores?**

This course explores the nature of time and space and how that has shaped and continues to shape the human condition.

### III. General Education and Quest Objectives & SLOs

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## General Education Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course confers General Education credit for Physics (P) with a secondary designation of International (N). It also offers fulfillment of 2,000 words towards the Writing Requirement (WR). Details of these credits are given below.

### *Physical Sciences (P)*

Physical science courses provide instruction in the basic concepts, theories and terms of the scientific method in the context of the physical sciences. Courses focus on major scientific developments and their impacts on society, science and the environment, and the relevant processes that govern physical systems. Students will formulate empirically-testable hypotheses derived from the study of physical processes, apply logical reasoning skills through scientific criticism and argument, and apply techniques of discovery and critical thinking to evaluate outcomes of experiments.

***For this course: this designation will be addressed by thorough discussion of a large number of concepts in science, specifically cosmology but also to include mechanics, quantum mechanics, thermodynamics, and astronomy. Experiential learning will allow students to practice the scientific method themselves, and presentations will encourage students to engage with current events in science such as the very recent discovery of dark energy and next-generation missions to map the large-scale structure of the Universe.***

### *International (N)*

This designation is always in conjunction with another program area: International courses promote the development of students' global and intercultural awareness. Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understanding of an increasingly connected world.

***For this course: students will draw on examples from intellectual history and history of science and then look for the same patterns in present-day society. In short, the shaping we will explore in historical examples—of science by society, art and philosophy and of society, art, and philosophy by science—will undergird critical analysis of these themes in the contemporary world. Students will consider modern conceptions of time, evolution in these conceptions both within their own life and over their own lifespan, and will also explore current debates in science that have broader impact on the world around them.***

*Further, students will explore the response of contemporary art to scientific ideas of time and space. These will be integrated throughout the course.*

## **Writing (WR)**

This designation is always in conjunction with another program area: Written assignments that count toward the University of Florida Writing Requirement should contain extended analysis and develop original, sophisticated ideas, not merely present hastily written or cursory thoughts. UF Writing Requirement assignments should include such elements as well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis or hypothesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., introduction, body, conclusion; introduction, methods, results, discussion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.

***For this course:*** *The WR designation will be satisfied by several marked formal writing assignments throughout the term, totaling 2,000 words. We will learn from excellent examples of expository writing through the class readings, and feedback will come both through multiple drafts marked by the instructors and through peer review and editing.*

## **The Course Student Learning Objectives are:**

***For this course:*** *Outline and investigate our conceptions of time and space through the two lenses of physics and philosophy, with additional color added by historical and cultural exploration/intellectual history.*

*Gain familiarity with the scientific method and important distinct philosophical strands on what science is (e.g. Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn).*

*Investigate science as an endeavor intimately linked with the intellectual, artistic, political, and economic culture of the time in which it occurs, with the particular goal of identifying patterns in the historical development of science that help us understand the interplay of science, culture, and society in the contemporary world through focused case studies.*

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline.  
***For this course:*** *Articulate a strong understanding of different ways of conceptualizing time and space, contextualizing them both scientifically and historically.*  
*Achievement of this learning outcome will be assessed through in-class participation, written work throughout the class including an extended essay and extended personal reflection/narrative, and a final presentation.*
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline.  
***For this course:*** *Articulate a strong understanding of how the scientific method works and synthesize different strands in philosophy of science into a working understanding of the scientific endeavor. They will be able to back this up with*

*specific examples from history of science.*

*Achievement of this learning outcome will be assessed through in-class participation, written work throughout the class including an extended essay and extended personal reflection/narrative, and a final presentation.*

- Critical Thinking: Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.  
***For this course:*** *Students will gain a nuanced yet clear understanding of science as an endeavor embedded in a larger context, and present that understanding via writing, visualization, reasoned debate with their peers, and polished, accessible public talks (see Final Project).*  
*Achievement of this learning outcome will be assessed through in-class participation, written work throughout the class including an extended essay and extended personal reflection/narrative, and a final presentation.*

## Quest 2 Program Goal

Grounded in the modes of inquiry and analysis characteristic of the social and/or biophysical sciences, Quest 2 courses invite students to address pressing questions facing human society and the planet—questions that outstrip the boundaries of any one discipline and that represent the kind of open-ended, complex issues they will face as critical, creative, and thoughtful adults navigating a complex and interconnected world.

## Quest 2 Course Objectives

Address in relevant ways the history, key themes, principles, terminologies, theories, or methodologies of the various social or biophysical science disciplines that enable us to address pressing questions and challenges about human society and/or the state of our planet.

Present different social and/or biophysical science methods and theories, and consider how their biases and influences shape pressing questions about the human condition and/or the state of our planet.

Enable students to analyze and evaluate (in writing and other forms of communication appropriate to the social and/or biophysical sciences) qualitative or quantitative data relevant to pressing questions concerning human society and/or the state of our planet. Analyze critically the role social and/or the biophysical sciences play in the lives of individuals and societies and the role they might play in students' undergraduate degree programs.

Explore or directly reference social and/or biophysical science resources outside the classroom and explain how engagement with those resources complements classroom work.



## Quest 2 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

■ At the conclusion of the Quest 2 course, students will be able to...

○ Identify, describe, and explain the cross-disciplinary dimensions of a pressing societal issue or challenge as represented by the social sciences and/or biophysical sciences incorporated into the course. (Content)

• ***For this course:*** *Our grappling with modern scientific ideas of time and space shapes every aspect of our culture and society. At the end of this course, students will have the content knowledge both of what physics and cosmology tell us about space and time, and how historically this developed and how that shapes the modern. Critically, students will also have explored modern-day conceptions of space and time across different art forms and cultures.*

○ Critically analyze quantitative or qualitative data appropriate for informing an approach, policy, or praxis that addresses some dimension of an important societal issue or challenge. (Critical Thinking)

• ***For this course:*** *The several marked essays, class debates, and vigorous discussion throughout will develop the skill of thinking critically about the way time and space shape our worldview. There will also be several experiential learning activities giving hands-on, quantitative analysis opportunities, such as measuring the distance to the Moon and the Newtonian gravitational constant  $G$  using time delay in recordings from the lunar landing, to analyzing modern-day data on the clustering of galaxies from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey.*

• *Develop and present, in terms accessible to an educated public, clear and effective responses to proposed approaches, policies, or practices that address important societal issues or challenges (Communication).*

• *The in-class debates and final, public-outreach presentation will help students practice this skill. See week-by-week and assignments for further details on these. Furthermore, students' work analyzing an upcoming mission to map the Universe's large-scale structure will further help them grapple with how an educated public responds to scientific progress.*

• *Connect course content with critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond (Connection).*

• *Course activities such as journaling, poetry, and the final presentation will offer fora for reflection on how the course material is relevant for the students' own lives. For instance, students' work on how their own conception of time has evolved, as well as how society's has evolved over their lifetimes, will provide an ideal opportunity for critical reflection on intellectual and personal development. The strongly multi-disciplinary nature of the course will also tie in to many other educational experiences students will have or have had at UF, such as visits to the UF Art Museum, the UF Music Department (see week-by-week for further detail) as well as other courses in history, writing, philosophy, and art the students may have taken or take at UF.*

## IV. Required Policies

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### 11. Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### 12. UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### 13. University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

### 14. Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

### 15. The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.