**On Time and Temporary**

Winter 2020 CILAS  
Thursdays 5-7 PM Cairo Time (Zoom Courses)

Shan Yang

Email: yangshan@aucegypt.edu

**Description**

The global pandemic has occasioned an impulse to think how we experience time as well as the acute structural violence deployed by the state and the capital. If to “change the world” is first of all to “change time” (Giorgio Agamben), this seminar invites participants to investigate the notion of time, the temporality and how to articulate the past, the present and the future. This seminar provides a critique of a spatialized, measurable, quantifiable, homogeneous, empty, and teleological time embedded in capitalist modernity and an investigation into its purest expression in the specular and complementary temporalities of industrial wage labor, of financial speculation and of bourgeois historicism. It attempts to conjugate the critical temporal with the corporeal, the sensibilities of being stuck, the indebted men and the precarious life. In so doing, it explores other imaginaries of time, the possible and the potential.

**Requirements**

1. Class attendance  
2. Read readings assigned each week

**Reading Schedule [[1]](#footnote-1)[[2]](#footnote-2)**

**Week one: Introduction**

*Time is invention or it is nothing at all. - Bergson*

*Texts*: Bergson, Henri. 2005. *Creative Evolution*. Random House, Inc.

**Week two: Philosophical Underpinnings**

*Texts*: Casarino, C. (2003). Time matters: Marx, Negri, Agamben, and the corporeal. *Strategies*, 16 (2), 185-206; Grosz, E. (2005). Bergson, Deleuze and the becoming of unbecoming. *parallax*, 11(2), 4-13.

**Week three:** **Clock Time, Labor and Master Time**

*Texts*: LeGoff, Jacques. (1980). “Merchants’ Time and Church Time in the Middle Ages” and Labor Time in the Crisis of the Fourteenth Century” In *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Smith, Mark. (1997) *Mastered by the Clock. Time, Slavery and Freedom in the American South.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. Chaps 1-4.

**Week four: Time and Class Struggle**

*Texts*: Marx, Karl. “1993. The Working Day” in *Capital Vol. 1*. pp. 340-416

**Week five: Globalizing Time and Space**

*Texts*: Harvey, D. (1999). Time—Space Compression and the Postmodern. *Modernity: After Modernity*, *4*, 98-118; Johnston, R. and A. Glasmeier. 2007. “Neo-Liberalism, Democracy and the State: Temporal and Spatial Constraints to Globalisation.” *Space and Polity* 11 (1), pp. 1-33.

**Week six:** **Bureaucratizing Time**

*Texts*: Auyero, J. (2012). *Patients of the state: The politics of waiting in Argentina.* Duke University Press.

**Week seven: Transition Times**

*Texts*: Abourahme, N. (2011). “Spatial collisions and discordant temporalities: Everyday life between camp and checkpoint.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(2), 453-6; Brun, C. (2015). “Active waiting and changing hopes: toward a time perspective on protracted displacement.” *Social Analysis*, Volume 59, Issue 1, Spring; Harms, E. (2013). “Eviction time in the new Saigon: Temporalities of displacement in the rubble of development.” *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 28, Issue 2, pp. 344–368.

**Week eight: Affective times**

*Texts:* Berlant, Lauren. (2011). *Cruel Optimism.* Durham: Duke University Press.

**Week nine: Trading the Future**

*Texts*: Han, C. (2012). *Life in debt. Times of care and violence in Neoliberal Chile* University of California Press.

**Week ten: On Critical Time**

*Texts：*Abourahme, N. (2014). Ruinous city, ruinous time: Future suspended and the science fiction of the present*. City*, 18(4-5), 577-582;Roy, A. (2020) “The Pandemic is a Portal” in *Azadi,* pp. 235-247*.*

1. I would like to give special thanks to Dr. Hanan Sabea who conducted graduate seminar On Time and Temporary at the American University in Cairo, which I took on Fall 2018. This syllabus is mainly inspired by her course. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. All texts will be shared through Dropbox. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)