**TIME IN LITERATURE--Through the Nineteenth Century**

**Notions of time**

1. Horizontal—objective, external time of clocks
2. Vertical—subjective, internal sense of durée (durational time of Henri Bergson)
3. Circular—cosmic sense of unchanging eternity or of cyclical recurrence, the time of myth

**Classical World**

1. For Aristotle and Plato the highest truth is the metaphysical contemplation of timeless essences
2. Classical dramatic unities assume the humans are essentially the same at all times and places (unity of action, place, time)

**Judeo-Christian Notions**

1. Eschatological View - human history has a direction, the coming of the Messiah or the Last Judgment, and individual events have meaning in terms of this goal
2. Figural View - human events as *figurae* (signs)of and eternal divine plan
3. Circular ideas of time also present in Christian Liturgy (repeated rites of churches)

**Renaissance**

1. reasserts classical ideas and combines with Christian
2. Machiavelli’s view of history producing only superficial changes
3. Renaissance painting - depicts classical past as contemporary
4. Battle of Ancients and Moderns challenge these views-- The “Ancients” maintained that Classical [literature](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/343579/literature) of Greece and Rome were proper models for literature; due to the rise of science and geographical discoveries (e.g. New World), “Moderns” challenged the supremacy of Classical writers

**18th and 19th Centuries**

1. Enlightenment emphasizes idea of progress
2. Religious changes - Calvinism emphasizes success in this world as a sign of piety
3. Economic and social changes - rural, aristocratic time replaced by capitalist view of time—rise of industry—time is money; aristocracy challenged by French Revolution and Napoleon
4. Archeological discoveries deepen sense of past before Classical past—

**Historical consciousness permeates every aspect of 19th Century**

1. Geology - Lyell's view of physical world as process
2. Biology - Darwin’s view of biological world as process
3. Philosophy – Hegel’s view of philosophical world as process
4. Politics – Marx’s view of social world as process

**The Realist Novel**

1. Realism – embedding of ordinary individuals and mundane events in context of history (e.g. Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, George Eliot)
2. The Novel – creation of temporally expansive and inclusive form linked to the rise of the middle class and realism

**TIME IN LITERATURE --The Modern Period**

**Decline of faith in historical progress**

1. Nietzsche warns in 1880s against tendency to divinize history, attacks Hegel, asserts eternal recurrence
2. Naturalists portray man as prey of biological and social forces
3. Decadent poets present pessimistic view of human possibilities in late l9th Century
4. Political and social events – industrial dislocation, Dreyfus Case (was unjustly accused of treason by French and sent to Devil’s Island), Boer War, anarchism, World War indicate that civilization is not progressing
5. Spengler’s *Decline of the West* articulates post-World War I pessimism
6. Modernists share this cultural pessimism. Ezra Pound describes the West as "an old bitch gone in the teeth.“

**Modernists react against linear historical time and explore other forms of time**

**Circular notions of time**

1. Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence of the universe
2. Spengler’s historical cycles (rise and fall of civilizations)
3. Freud and Jung show that humans continually reenact mythic archetypes
4. Modernists pattern works on ancient myths, classic unities, and natural, recurring rhythms of the day and year

**Subjective experience of time**

1. Bergsonian duration – intuited by Romantics and exploited by psychological novelists
2. Cinematic editing provides model for more fluid movement in time
3. Surrealists extend even further in subconscious and dislocate narrative even more radically
4. Expressionists and Absurdists also take subjective experience, but turn it inside out and present as

objective nightmare

1. Use of physical text to infer new relationship of space to time – spatial form

**Modernist withdrawal from conventional historical time is not an escape but attempt to see Western Civilization from a new perspective e.g. Joyce’s Ulysses, Eliot's “The Wasteland"**

(courtesy, Dr. Dean McWilliams, Ohio University)