

## **A Great Circle With No Rim**

Capita Selecta Course

1 ECTS

June 2026

A Great Circle With No Rim is a 1 ECTS evening Capita Selecta that investigates how to think, design, and act across different structures of time.

During the last century one of the most significant shifts occurred in how we understand and relate to time. During this course, we will trace the way different species and planetary events fit within the contemporary notion of time, what makes this notion limiting, and how it can be traversed through the exercise of making models of time. The central scientific and creative problem of this course addresses the challenge of recognizing and envisioning relationships across different systems of time that we may be able to trace beyond the central regime of personal impending deadlines and planetary and political emergencies.

Moving through geology, animal migration, notions of metamorphosis and symbiosis as cycles, as well as nesting, other-than-human archives, and the future-pasts these imply, this course theorizes time as a material and existing problem. Looking at references across culture, biology, literature, philosophy, and design, students will study how to read and evaluate other-than-human life in rhythms, durations, intervals, cycles, ruptures, and acts of departures and returns. The objective of this course is to ask what kinds of worlds become possible when time and its plasticity is understood as a medium for relating.

Specifically, we'll look at how we might understand our time in relation to the seventeen-year emergence of cicadas, the migratory timelines of whales, the thousand-year-old archives of the earth and forests, or the relative immortality of fungi. By looking at time across vertical, seasonal, and migratory scales, students will develop specific methods for recognizing how

biological, cultural, and geological time is connected and relevant to designing solutions for the future.

The course introduces students to the notion of time models as both an analytic tool and an exploratory practice, a way of looking at the world. Through lectures, discussions, case studies, and independent time modeling, participants will strengthen their capacity for expanding and contracting time, as well as recognizing it all around us.

### **Learning goals**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe diverse frameworks of other-than-human temporality across biological, geological, cultural contexts
2. Analyze how different temporal systems and frameworks reshape relationships between beings, environments, and structures of knowledge.
3. Understand the role of modeling and design in articulating ecological, philosophical, and social problems
4. Develop concrete and speculative temporal models that organize relationships in time
5. Conduct an independent case study using course concepts to examine a chosen framework of time.
6. Synthesize the independent research across groups into a system of interdependent patterns.
7. Critically reflect on time as one of the problems of designing, and theorize the relevance of understanding time in biology, ecology, artistic and personal worldmaking

### **Teaching methods and learning activities**

As a 1 ECTS course, A Great Circle With No Rim consists of four evening sessions combining two lectures and discussions, a modelling exercise, guided project development and reflections.

### Session 1: Studying Other-Than-Human Time

While in the opening session we look at time that dominates our ways of knowing the world. This session introduces students to examples of other than human time. Looking at the rock cycles, cicada emergence, fungal sprawl, migratory rhythms, nesting practices, and transformational intervals, the session will establish how time is plural and relative. Students will examine how different beings organize existence and likely plan for the future as well as deal with the past, through their distinct cycles of repetition, and adaptation.

### Session 2: Designing and Modeling Problems

The second session focuses on what it means to model time hands on. We will explore existing and speculative models, art models and various design methodologies that allow us to understand abstract temporal relationships as legible and coherent structures. Particular attention will be given to identifying organizing principles, hidden assumptions, and the ethical implications of modeling across species and scales.

### Session 3: Independent Case Studies

Students will develop individual case studies focused on a chosen temporal other than human framework. Through guided support they will, as a group, research, analyze, and begin constructing a temporal model that reflects their specific chosen (or assigned) time zone.

### Session 4: Review and Collective Synthesis

In the final session, students will present their temporal models and collectively examine how individual frameworks are connected into larger systems. Our emphasis will be on synthesis: linking separate temporalities of very different realms into a relational constellation, highlighting shared structures, divergences, and possibilities beyond the contemporary time of media and screen.

#### **Assessment is based on:**

- Independent case study
- Final presentation and participation

- Engagement in discussion and model review throughout the course

### **Suggested readings**

Core readings:

- Tim Ingold, *Imagining for the Real*
- Vinciane Despret, *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?*
- Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*

### **Course ethos**

This course treats time as a material form. The students are invited to acknowledge and think with processes that exceed human urgency and to imagine forms of relation grounded in attentiveness to scales, rhythms, duration, and interdependence.