Philosophy and Science Fiction
Essay One: Looper

Young Joe: So do you know what's gonna happen? You've done all this already?
Old Joe: I don't want to talk about time travel shit. If we start talking about it, we're gonna be here all day, talking about it, making diagrams with straws. It doesn't matter.
Young Joe: I hurt myself, it changes your body. So does what I do now change your memories?
Old Joe: It doesn't matter….It's messy

Over the course of the past several classes, we have been discussing a core metaphysical issue as it arises in both philosophy and science fiction: what is the nature of time and what is the nature of time travel? We have seen that reflecting on the nature of time travel narratives forces us to think about our conception of time, time travel, and what seems conceptually plausible for both. For your first essay in this course, I am asking that you demonstrate some understanding of these conceptual issues as they emerge in philosophy and science fiction by through your analysis of time travel in the film Looper. When old and young Joe confront one another in the diner, old Joe says he doesn't want to "talk about time travel shit." It's messy. But let's imagine that old and young Joe are a little more philosophical than they otherwise appear to be and they decide to engage in a brief analysis of the nature of time travel as it is conceived in the film, trying to make it less "messy." How would that conversation go? What would they conclude about the nature of time travel as conceived in the film Looper? Write a brief dialogue in which they philosophically wrestle with time travel as conceived within the universe of the film and reach a conclusion regarding its plausibility.

Remember that this is a philosophy essay and not a film review or film analysis. You should be careful not to summarize the movie’s plot nor simply provide a movie review that remains solely on the surface of the film. Your goal is to demonstrate your grasp of the conceptual matters we have studied in this first unit of the course through the construction of your dialogue.

Some general points to keep in mind about writing philosophy essays:
- Your essay should be focused and well-organized. Quote appropriately and relevantly from the texts and remember to make specific and detailed points.
- Don’t be overly general or vague.
- You should follow a process approach to writing your essay, composing a draft, revising and editing, and composing a final draft.
- As you work through the process of taking notes, re-reading relevant passages, composing a draft, you should also work on articulating a thesis that will organize and structure each essay. All of this should be brought together in the final drafts of your essays.
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- Remember, philosophical essays are primarily argumentative essays. You should be trying to make a point in your essay (your thesis) and supporting it with relevant evidence. Even a dialogue can reach a conclusion identified as the point or thesis of the dialogue.
- Make sure you strike an appropriate balance between exposition and evaluation. You don’t want the majority of your essay to be summary or description. Keep that to a minimum and focus on developing an argument.

Your essay should be approximately 750 - 1000 words in length, typed, double-spaced, employing standard fonts and margins. It should have a well-developed thesis and line of reasoning, employ good grammar and spelling, and be written at an appropriate level with an appropriate style. Consult your copy of The Everyday Writer or the various links included in the course materials if you have questions about writing. The essay is due at the start of class on Tuesday, Feb. 11. Late essays will be accepted up to one week past the due date with 5 points being deducted from the grade for each day late.