Robert Sharf

My paper will take as its focus the signature Sarvāstivāda doctrine that past, present, and future things all exist. The Sarvāstivāda theory of time anticipates, in many respects, "block-time" models of the universe that are in favor today among theoretical physicists. In these models, time is a dimension spread out like space, and everything that ever was or will be has a fixed position within the block. My argument is that the similarities between the early Buddhist theories and contemporary ones are neither coincidental nor insignificant: in both cases they are attempts to respond to puzzles concerning the nature of change, causation, and the "flow" and "direction" of time.