

**Practicalities**

Philosophy G9485: Philosophy of Language

W 2:10 pm-4:00 pm, 716 Philosophy Hall

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**Course Description**

Modals and conditionals are two types of expressions we use to talk about the non-actual and the unknown. This class is a survey of some classic and contemporary work on various aspects of both of them. We will focus on the semantics and pragmatics of modals and conditionals, however, we will touch on a number of other areas, especially in metaphysics and epistemology. Some questions about subjectivity and objectivity are raised by considerations of epistemic modals and indicative conditionals. We will discuss whether the treatment of these expressions requires modifying the basic framework used to theorize about meaning and language use.

**Prerequisites**

None, but some facility with basic logic is all but essential.

**Requirements**

A couple short exercises on conditionals. One paper due at end of the semester.

**Readings**

All readings will be posted online except Jonathan Bennett's *A Philosophical Guide to Conditionals*, available at Book Culture.

**Some Online Resources**

Dorothy Edgington's *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article on conditionals:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/conditionals/>

Branden Fitelson's conditionals course:

<http://www.fitelson.org/conditionals/>

Kai von Fintel's MIT course covering modals and conditionals (inter alia)

<http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/Linguistics-and-Philosophy/24-973Spring-2005/CourseHome/>

Barry Loewer and Jason Stanley's conditionals course

<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/%7Ejasoncs/conditionals.html>

**1/21:** *Introduction*

**1/28:** *Counterfactuals 1*

Stalnaker, “A Theory of Conditionals”, Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (selections), Bennett, 10, 11

**2/4:** *Counterfactuals 2*

Lewis, “Counterfactual Dependence and Time’s Arrow”, Edgington, “On Conditionals”, 250-259, Bennett, ch 12

**2/11:** *Indicative Conditionals and Pragmatics*

Grice, “Logic and Conversation”, selections, Stalnaker, “Indicative Conditionals”, Bennett, 2

**2/18:** *Indicative Conditionals and Probability*

Edgington, “On Conditionals”, 259–280, Bennett, 4+5

**2/25:** *Non-Truth-Value Approaches*

Gibbard, “Two Recent Theories of Conditionals”, Edgington, “On Conditionals” (remainder), Bennett, 6+7

**3/4:** *Modals and Modal Analysis of Conditionals*

Lewis, “Adverbs of Quantification”, Kratzer, “Modality”, “Conditionals”, “What ‘Must’ and ‘Can’ Must and Can Mean”

**3/11** *More on Kratzer*

Von Fintel and Gillies, “Quantifiers and If-clauses”

**3/18** *Spring Break!*

**3/25:** *Contextualism about Epistemic Modals*

Von Fintel and Gillies, “Might Made Right”

**3/18:** *Relativism*

Egan, Hawthorne, Weatherson, “Epistemic Modals in Context”, MacFarlane, “Making Sense of Relative Truth”

**4/1:** *Dynamic Approaches*

Veltman, “Defaults in Update Semantics”, Swanson, TBA.

**4/8:** *Parameter-Rich Approaches/Comparison of Different Theories*

Yalcin, “Epistemic Modals”

**4/15:** *Reference to Sets of Possible Worlds*

Stone, “Anaphoric Parallels Between Tense and Modality”, Schlenker, “Conditionals as Definite Descriptions”

**4/22:** *Pragmatics of Conditionals and Modals*

Williams, “Conversation and Conditionals”, Moss, “On the Pragmatics of Counterfactuals”, Klinedinst, TBA.

**4/29** *TBA/catchup*