

Philosophy 53340

Conditionals

Winter 2012

T 4:30-7:20

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Conditionals play a prominent role in everyday reasoning as well as in many proposed analyses of key philosophical concepts such as knowledge, causation, freedom, and dispositional features. The best logic and semantic treatment of the English language conditional, or of a philosophically regimented conditional well-suited to these analytic tasks, is a subject of ongoing dispute. We will begin by studying the possible-world semantics for subjunctive conditionals developed by Stalnaker and Lewis, and from there consider more recent innovations and alternatives to the Stalnaker-Lewis semantics, such as probabilistic conditionals, dynamic conditionals, and restrictor-clause conditionals. Throughout, we will try to arrive at a better understanding of the formal criteria that any successful theory of conditionals must fulfill, and relate these criteria to the prominent role of conditionals in a number of notorious paradoxes about everyday reasoning, including those arising from deliberations about conditional obligations.

BOOKS

All course readings will be available through the course's Chalk website. The literature on conditionals is massive and it is unavoidable to omit a lot of interesting discussions. The following book offers a very useful introduction to the philosophical literature on conditionals:

- Bennett, *A Philosophical Guide to Conditionals*, New York: Oxford University Press (2003)

The following collections of essays contain a number of seminal papers on conditionals:

- Harper, Stalnaker, and Pearce, *Ifs: Conditionals, Belief, Decision, Chance, and Time*, Dordrecht: Reidel (1981)
- Jackson, *Conditionals*, New York: Oxford University Press (1991)

All of the above books as well as some other useful material are on reserve at Regenstein.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be a substantial research paper (15+ pages) due on March 15th, in Professor Willer's mailbox in the Philosophy Dept. Office (Stuart 202). The topic must be approved ahead of time. Topics must concern an issue discussed in the class and papers must make significant use of course readings.

ROADMAP

The following schedule provides an overview over the topics that we will address during this semester as well as the assigned readings. Additional recommended readings will be announced in class. Readings may change as the semester goes on. Updated versions of this syllabus will be posted on Chalk as changes are made.

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1	Classifying Conditionals	Bennett, <i>A Philosophical Guide to Conditionals</i> , Ch. 1 Harman, "If and Modus Ponens" Iatridou, "The Grammatical Ingredients of Counterfactuality" Ippolito, "Presuppositions and Implicatures in Counterfactuals"
Week 2	Material Conditional Analyses	Bennett, <i>A Philosophical Guide to Conditionals</i> , Chs. 2-3 Grice, "Logic and Conversation" Grice, "Indicative Conditionals" Jackson, "On Assertion and Indicative Conditionals"
Week 3	Lewis and Stalnaker	Lewis, <i>Counterfactuals</i> , Chs. 1-2 Stalnaker, "A Theory of Conditionals" Stalnaker, "Indicative Conditionals" Stalnaker, "A Defense of Conditional Excluded Middle"
Week 4	Restrictor Analyses of Conditionals	Kratzer, "Conditionals" Kratzer, "The Notional Category of Modality" Lewis, "Adverbs of Quantification"
Week 5	Operators vs Restrictors	Gillies, "Iffiness" Khoo, "Operators or Restrictors? A Reply to Gillies"
Week 6	Modals and Conditionals: Iffy Oughts	Kolodny and MacFarlane, "Ifs and Oughts" Charlow, "What We Know and What To Do"
Week 7	Contrary-to-Duty Conditionals	Chisholm, "Contrary-to-Duty Imperatives and Deontic Logic" Forrester, "Gentle Murder, or the Adverbial Samaritan" Willer, "Dynamic Thoughts on Conditional Oughts"
Week 8	Arguments for NTV Views	Lewis, "Probabilities of Conditionals and Conditional Probabilities" Gibbard, "Two Recent Theories of Conditionals"
Week 9	Probabilistic Analyses	Edgington, "On Conditionals" Edgington, "Counterfactuals"
Week 10	Responses to Arguments for NTV Views	Gillies, "Epistemic Conditionals and Conditional Epistemics" Gillies, "On Truth-Conditions for <i>If</i> (but Not Quite Only <i>If</i>)" Rothschild, "Do Indicative Conditionals Express Propositions?"