

# Philosophy 58010

## Topics in Philosophy of Language: Future Contingents

Spring 2020

W 1:30-4:20

Instructor: Malte Willer (willer@uchicago.edu)

Office hours: by appointment

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Future contingents — statements about the future that are contingent in the sense that the predicted event, state, action or whatever is at stake is neither impossible nor inevitable — have played an important role in the philosophical literature ever since Aristotle’s discussion in *De Interpretatione* IX. The goal of this class is to arrive at a better understanding of the semantic and epistemological implications of some of the most prominent puzzles surrounding future contingents. How can future contingents be true or false if the future is genuinely open, and what is their meaning if the question of truth or falsity does not arise? How can one reconcile the assumption of God’s foreknowledge with the freedom and moral accountability of human beings? What, if anything, can we know about the future if it is genuinely open, and how does knowledge about the future relate to knowledge about the past and the present?

### READINGS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All course readings will be available through the course’s Canvas website. There will be a substantial research paper (15+ pages) due on June 9th. 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. The literature on future contingents is massive and we will have to omit very interesting discussions. Additional recommended readings will be announced in class. Readings may change as the semester goes on. Updated versions of this syllabus will be posted as changes are made.

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1	The Problem of Future Contingents	Ackrill, <i>Aristotle’s Categories and De Interpretatione</i> , pp. 50–53, 132–142 Prior, “Three Valued Logic and Future Contingents”
Week 2	The Master Argument	Prior, “Diodoran Modalities” Prior, “The Logic of Omniscience” Prior, <i>Past, Present and Future</i> , Ch. VII Todd and Rabern, “Future Contingents and the Logic of Temporal Omniscience”
Week 3	Supervaluations and Beyond	Thomason, “Indeterminist Time and Truth-Value Gaps” Todd, “Future Contingents are all False! On Behalf of a Russellian Open Future” Schoubye and Rabern, “Against the Russellian Open Future”
Week 4	Future Contingents and Relativism	MacFarlane, “Future Contingents and Relative Truth” MacFarlane, <i>Assessment Sensitivity</i> , Ch. 9 Brogaard, “Sea Battle Semantics” García-Carpintero, “Relativism, the Open Future, and Propositional Truth”
Week 5	Background: Modals and Conditionals	Kratzer, “Modality” Lewis, <i>Counterfactuals</i> , Chs. 1–2 Stalnaker, “A Theory of Conditionals”

Week 6	<i>Will</i> : Tense vs. Modality	Kissine, "Why <i>Will</i> is not a Modal" Klecha, "Diagnosing Modality in Predictive Expressions" Giannakidou and Mari, "A Unified Analysis of the Future as Epistemic Modality"
Week 8	Selection Semantics for <i>Will</i>	Cariani and Santorio, " <i>Will</i> Done Better" Todd, "The Problem of Future Contingents: Scoping out a Solution" Cariani, <i>The Modal Future</i> , Parts I–II
Week 8	Selection Semantics for <i>Will</i> (cont.)	Condoravdi, "Temporal Interpretation of Modals" Yalcin, "Epistemic Modals" Cariani, <i>The Modal Future</i> , Part III
Week 9	Predictions	Ninan, "Easy Foreknowledge" Cariani, <i>The Modal Future</i> , Parts IV–V