Philosophy 24015/34015 // Linguistics 24015/34015

Modality

Spring 2016

TR 9:00-10:20

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Course Description

Modal information—information conveyed by sentences such as 'Mary might be at home' or 'Charles ought to give to the poor'—play an outstanding role in everyday discourse and reasoning. The goal of this class is to explain and evaluate contemporary semantic theories of modality by discussing a wide range of linguistic phenomena from the perspective of these theories. After introducing possible worlds semantics for modality developed in modal logic, we will consider current theories of modal semantics within linguistics as well as the most important empirical areas of research. Throughout, we will keep an eye on the relation between modality and other topics that are prominent in linguists and philosophy, including tense, conditionals, and discourse meaning.

Books

The following text is required for the course:

— Portner, *Modality*, New York: Oxford University Press (2009)

The remaining course readings will be available through the course's Chalk website. The following anthologies containsome of the course readings in addition to a wide range of useful secondary material:

— Davis and Gillon, *Semantics: A Reader*, New York: Oxford University Press (2004)

— Portner and Partee, *Formal Semantics: The Essential Readings*, Oxford: Blackwell (2002)

The following book offers a very useful introduction to the basics of classical natural language semantics:

— Heim and Kratzer, *Semantics in Generative Grammar*, Oxford: Blackwell (1998)

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

Course Requirements

Undergraduates are required to write a short midterm (4-5 pages) and one final paper (7-8 pages). The midterm is due in class on the assigned day; the final paper is due by 5pm on the assigned day in Professor Willer's mailbox in Stuart 202.

| Midterm | due May 3rd | worth 30% |
| Final Paper | due June 7th | worth 30% |

Paper topics will be uploaded to the Chalk site in advance of the due dates. Students may, if they wish, design their own paper topics after consultation with the instructor. Late papers will be docked a grade per day (e.g., B+ to B) unless you have received approval ahead of time. There will be no final exam.

Graduate students are required to write a short midterm (4-5 pages, due May 3rd, worth 20%) and a substantial term paper (15+ pages, due June 7th, worth 40%). Topics must be approved ahead of time, concern an issue discussed in the class, and make significant use of course readings as well as additional recommended material.

In addition, there will be biweekly homework assigments (worth 40%).

Attendance of lectures and discussion sections is expected unless you have a reasonable excuse. Class participation will play a decisive role in determining the final grade of borderline cases.

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	Basics	Portner, *Modality* ch. 1 Sider, *Logic for Philosophy*, chs. 2.1–2.3
Week 2	Modal Logic	Portner, *Modality*, ch. 2
Week 3	Relative Modality	Portner, *Modality*, chs. 3.1.1–3.1.2 Kratzer, "What 'Must' and 'Can' Must and Can Mean"
Week 4	Ordering Semantics	Portner, *Modality*, ch. 3.1.3 Kratzer, "The Notional Category of Modality" Kratzer, "Modality"
Week 5	Modals and Conditionals	Portner, *Modality*, ch. 5.2 Kratzer, "Conditionals" Stalnaker, "A Theory of Conditionals" Lewis, "Counterfactuals and Comparative Possibility" (selections)
Week 6	Dynamic Pragmatics	Stalnaker, "Assertion" Lewis, "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"
Week 7	Modality in Dynamic Semantics	Portner, *Modality*, ch. 3.2 Veltman, "Defaults in Update Semantics"
Week 8	Epistemic Modals	Portner, *Modality*, chs. 4.1–4.2 Papafragou, "Epistemic Modality and Truth Conditions" MacFarlane, "Epistemic Modals are Assessment-Sensitive" Yalcin, "Epistemic Modals"
Week 9	Modality and Time	Portner, *Modality*, ch. 5.1 Condoravdi, "Temporal Interpretation of Modals" Klecha, "Diagnosing Modality in Predictive Expressions"
Week 10	Conclusion & Outlook	(no reading)