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Foundations of Modal Metaphysics

PHIL C3912
Fall 2015
Friday 2-4pm

Description: In this seminar, we will discuss foundational questions in the theory of metaphysical possibility. Is the notion of metaphysical possibility intelligible? If so, what are the bounds of metaphysical possibility? What justifies us in judging that something is metaphysically possible? What explains the reliability of our judgments of this kind? What is the relation between metaphysical possibility and logical possibility, and the relation between metaphysical possibility and physical possibility? Is metaphysical possibility "metaphysically privileged", or is the question of what is possible relevantly like the question of whether the Parallel Postulate is true (as a question of pure mathematics)?

Requirements: A 20-30 minute presentation on a reading, and a term paper (\approx 20 pages), due **December 11**.

Week

Topic

Literature

Intelligibility

Week	Topic	Literature
Sept. 11	Quine	<i>Quine</i> : "Three Grades of Modal Involvement" <i>Optional: Carnap</i> : "Meaning and Necessity" / <i>Lewis and Langford</i> : "Symbolic Logic"
Sept. 18	Kripke	<i>Kripke</i> : "Semantical Considerations on Modal Logic" <i>Ballerin</i> : "The Interpretation of Necessity and the Necessity of Interpretation" Handout on Normal Constant and Variable Domain Modal

		<p>Logics with Necessary Identity and Non-Rigid Designators</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> <i>Barcan Marcus</i>: “A Functional Calculus of First Order Based on Strict Implication” / <i>Hintikka</i>: “Modalities and Quantification” / <i>Menzel</i>: Selections from “Actualism” / <i>Prior</i>: “Tense and Modality”</p>
September 25	Lewis	<p><i>Lewis</i>: “Counterpart Theory for Quantified Modal Logic”</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> <i>Mackie and Jago</i>: “Transworld Identity” / <i>Quine</i>: “Worlds Away”</p>

Extent

October 2	Orthodoxy	<p><i>Kripke</i>: Selections from “Naming and Necessity”</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> <i>Lewis</i>: Selections from “On the Plurality of Worlds” / <i>Nolan</i>: “The Extent of Metaphysical Necessity”</p>
October 9	Natural Law	<i>Edgington</i> : “Two Kinds of Possibility”
October 16	Identity and Constitution	<p><i>Wilson</i>: “Why Contingent Identity is Necessary”</p> <p>Handout on Modal Logics with Contingent Identity</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> <i>Atkins and Robertson</i>: “Arguments for Origins Essentialism”</p>
October 23	Logic, Mathematics, and Mereology	<i>Mortensen</i> : “Anything is Possible”

		<p><u>Handout on Non-Normal and Many-Valued Modal Logics</u></p> <p><u>Optional:</u> <i>Cameron</i>: “The Contingency of Composition” / <i>Clarke-Doane</i> “Morality and Mathematics: The Evolutionary Challenge” / <i>Hale</i>: “Absolute Necessities” / <i>Leech</i>: “Logic and the Laws of Thought” / <i>Nolan</i>: “Impossible Worlds: A Modest Approach” / <i>Rumfitt</i>: “Logical Necessity” / <i>Rosen</i>: “A Study in Modal Deviance” / <i>Russell and Whitehead</i>: Selections from “Principia Mathematica” / <i>Wittgenstein</i>: Selections from “Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus” / <i>Yagisawa</i>: “Beyond Possible Worlds”</p>
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Knowledge

October 30	Conceivability	<p><i>Chalmers</i>: “Does Conceivability Entail Possibility?”</p> <p><u>Handout on Two-Dimensional Semantics</u></p> <p><u>Optional:</u> <i>Bealer</i>: “Modal Epistemology and the Rationalist Renaissance” / <i>Descartes</i>: “Meditations on First Philosophy”, <i>Hume</i>: Selections from the “Inquiry” and “Treatise” / <i>Yablo</i>: “Conceivability and Possibility”</p>
November 6	Counterfactuals	<i>Williamson</i> : “Philosophical Knowledge and Knowledge of Counterfactuals”

		<p><u>Handout on Conditional Logics</u></p> <p><u>Optional</u>: Brogaard and Salerno: “Why Counterpossibles are Non-Trivial” / <i>Casullo</i>: “Counterfactual and Modal Knowledge” / <i>Hill</i>: “Modality, Modal Epistemology and the Metaphysics of Consciousness”, <i>Kment</i>: “Modality and Explanatory Reasoning” / <i>Williamson</i>: “Counterpossibles”</p>
November 13	Essence	<p><i>Lowe</i>: “What is the Source of our Knowledge of Modal Truths”</p> <p><u>Optional</u>: <i>Fine</i>: “Essence and Modality” / <i>Hale</i>: Selections from “Necessary Beings”</p>
November 20 [No Class Next Week]	Disagreement	<p><i>Wright</i>: Selections from “Truth and Objectivity”</p> <p><i>Yablo</i>: Selections from “Conceivability and Possibility”</p> <p><u>Optional</u>: <i>Clarke-Doane</i>: “What is Absolute Undecidability?” / Selections from <i>Mackie</i>: “Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong” / Selections from Terseman “Moral Disagreement”</p>
December 4	Epistemic Luck	<p><i>Lewis</i>: Selections from “On the Plurality of Worlds”</p> <p><i>Benacerraf</i>: “Mathematical Truth”</p>

		<p><u>Optional:</u> <i>Clarke-Doane</i>: “What is the Benacerraf Problem” / <i>Field</i>: Selections from “Realism, Mathematics, and Modality” <i>Godel</i>: “What is Cantor’s Continuum Problem?” / <i>Peacocke</i>: Selections from “Being Known” / <i>Williamson</i>: Selections from “Modal Logic as Metaphysics”</p>
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Objectivity

<p>December 11</p> <p>[Term Paper Due Today]</p>	<p>Modal Pluralism</p>	<p><i>Clarke-Doane</i>: “Modal Objectivity”</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> <i>Beall and Restall</i>: Selections from “Logical Pluralism” / <i>Balaguer</i>: Selections from “Platonism and Anti-Platonism in Mathematics” / <i>Hamkins</i>: “The Set-Theoretic Multiverse” / <i>Sider</i>: Selections from “Writing the Book of the World” / <i>Unger</i>: Selections from “Empty Ideas”</p>
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