

## PHILOSOPHY 611: SEMANTICS BEYOND TRUTH CONDITIONS

CONTACT INFO	<p>Sarah Moss ssmoss@umich.edu office: 2232 Angell Hall office hours: Tuesdays 2:30–4:30 and by appointment</p>
FOCUS	<p>This seminar will serve as an introduction to some fundamental questions in the philosophy of language, in the context of an extended exploration of current debates about epistemic modals, moral vocabulary, and tense. In particular, we will compare contextualist, relativist, and expressivist theories of various expressions. Our goal for the semester will be to understand exactly how each sort of theory may be defined, implemented, and defended. Absolutely no background in the philosophy of language is necessary for this seminar; we will gradually build familiarity with necessary tools and results over the course of the semester.</p>
MATERIALS	<p>All readings will be posted on our course webpage at <a href="http://ctools.umich.edu">http://ctools.umich.edu</a>.</p>
GRADING	<p>Active participation in weekly seminar discussions: 10% Presentation at one seminar meeting: 30% Weekly assignments submitted for four seminar meetings: 20%<sup>1</sup> Research paper: 40%</p> <p>The requirements for this course are designed to help you develop the wide range of skills required to be a professional philosopher. By completing the assignments for this seminar, you will gain experience refereeing papers, writing book reviews, presenting material clearly to students, participating actively as a conference audience member, and delivering your research in a workshop setting. Perhaps most importantly, this constant stream of engagement with our seminar material should generate ideas that you can use in developing your final research paper for the course. In a nutshell, the assessments for the course re-create contexts that give rise to good ideas for philosophers at any career stage. The main pedagogical aim of the seminar is to thereby de-mystify the process of having good philosophical ideas.</p> <p>If you are presenting at a discussion session, you must email me a detailed handout for your presentation at least 48 hours in advance of the seminar meeting. Similarly, weekly assignments must be emailed to me at least 48 hours in advance of the relevant seminar meeting. These assignments will be assessed according to whether they reflect a long and serious effort to engage with the material to be discussed.</p>
SCHEDULE	<p>1/9      introductory meeting<sup>2</sup></p>

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<sup>1</sup> All four of these assignments must be completed before April 10, at which point your attention should be directed toward developing ideas for your final research paper.

<sup>2</sup> As per Philosophy Department guidelines, contentful seminar meetings will begin in the third week of the university academic calendar.

- 1/23 David Lewis, "Index, Context, and Content"  
 Egan, Hawthorne, and Weatherson, "Epistemic Modals in Context"  
 David Kaplan, "Demonstratives"  
 Gareth Evans, "Reference and Contingency"  
 Martin Davies and Lloyd Humberstone, "Two Notions of Necessity"  
 Keith DeRose, "Epistemic Possibilities"

Weekly assignment: The appendix to "Epistemic Modals in Context" contains two detailed proposals for implementing the relativist program. Study both proposals carefully. Decide which you think is the stronger theory, and explain why it beats the alternative.

- 1/30 seminar moved to the end of the semester due to conference travel<sup>3</sup>

- 2/6 **seminar guest: Dilip Ninan**  
 Dilip Ninan, "Semantics and the Objects of Assertion"  
 Brian Weatherson, "Attitudes and Relativism"  
 Jeff King, "Tense, Modality, and Semantic Values"  
 Angelika Kratzer, "What Must and Can Must and Can Mean"

Weekly assignment: Brainstorm two clarificatory questions and two objections that you would like Ninan to answer in seminar.

- 2/13 **seminar guest: John Hawthorne**  
 Cian Dorr and John Hawthorne, "Embedding Epistemic Modals"  
 John Hawthorne, "Eavesdroppers and Epistemic Modals"  
 Seth Yalcin, "Epistemic Modals"

Weekly assignment: Brainstorm two clarificatory questions and two objections that you would like Hawthorne to answer in seminar.

- 2/20 John MacFarlane, "Epistemic Modals are Assessment-Sensitive"  
 Andy Egan, "Epistemic Modals and Assertion"  
 John MacFarlane, "Future Contingents and Relative Truth"  
 Robert Stalnaker, "Assertion"

Weekly assignment: Read the 13 July 2004 post "Epistemic Modals, Relative Truth, and Contextualism" by Jason Stanley on the blog *Certain Doubts*. Suppose that you meet Stanley at a conference. He discovers that you are interested in epistemic modals and starts arguing that the view defended by Egan, Weatherson, and Hawthorne is contextualist rather than relativist.

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<sup>3</sup>In lieu of this meeting, we will meet for three 45-minute conference-style paper presentations after the official final day of classes.

Do you accept the argument that Stanley is making? Anticipate ways in which Egan or Weatherson might respond to Stanley, and explain why you accept or reject these responses.

- 2/27      von Fintel and Gillies, "CIA Leaks"  
              von Fintel and Gillies, "*Might Made Right*"

Weekly assignment: Read the summary of the APA commentary "Epistemic Modal Belief Reports are a Problem for von Fintel and Gillies" by Ben Lennertz, as well as the text of the response developed by von Fintel and Gillies. Suppose that you are attending the APA session at which these papers are presented. Develop two questions that you would ask after the papers are presented, both a question for Lennertz and a question for von Fintel and Gillies. In addition, spell out detailed arguments that support any critical points raised by your questions.

- 3/13      **seminar guest: Keith DeRose**  
              Keith DeRose, "Epistemic Possibilities"  
              Keith DeRose, "Simple 'Might's, Indicative Possibilities, and the Open Future"

Weekly assignment: Brainstorm two clarificatory questions and two objections that you would like DeRose to answer in seminar.

- 3/20      Simon Blackburn, Chapter 6 of *Spreading the Word*  
              Gideon Rosen, "Blackburn's *Essays in Quasi-Realism*"  
              Simon Blackburn, "*Attitudes and Contents*"  
              Simon Blackburn, "*How to Be an Ethical Anti-Realist*"

Weekly assignment: Suppose that you have just been asked to complete a book review of *Spreading the Word* for *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*. Draft the material that you would include in your discussion of Chapter 6.

Alternative weekly assignment: Compare and contrast the terms 'truth relativism' and 'content relativism' as used by Egan and Weatherson in their introduction to *Epistemic Modality*, 'indexical relativism' as used by Weatherson in "Conditionals and Indexical Relativism," 'indexical relativism' as used by Drier in "Relativism (and Expressivism) and the Problem of Disagreement," and 'relativism' and 'nonindexical contextualism' as used by MacFarlane in "Nonindexical Contextualism." Find some compelling way of organizing this vocabulary so that similarities and differences in usage are as clear as possible.

- 3/27 David Lewis, "Quasi-Realism is Fictionalism"  
Simon Blackburn, "Quasi-Realism No Fictionalism"  
*Simon Blackburn, "Relativism"*

Weekly assignment: Suppose that you have just been asked to referee the paper "Quasi-Realism No Fictionalism" for publication in a major journal. Read the 12-page "Guidelines on How to Referee" by Thom Brooks, posted on our course webpage. With these guidelines in mind, prepare a referee report for this paper.

- 4/3 Seth Yalcin, "Epistemic Modals"  
Eric Swanson, "How Not To Theorize about the Language of Subjective Uncertainty"  
*Seth Yalcin, "Bayesian Expressivism"*

Weekly assignment: Find three examples of nested epistemic modals in natural language, each from a published source that can be relied on to contain standard English usage. Discuss what semantic values Yalcin would assign to these constructions, and decide whether his treatment of these constructions counts in favor of his account or against it.

- 4/10 Sarah Moss, "On the Pragmatics of Epistemic Modals"  
*Sarah Moss, "Epistemology Formalized"*
- 4/17 Sarah Moss, "Probabilistic Facts and Probabilistic Knowledge"  
*David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge"*
- 4/24 45-minute conference-style presentations of student papers