

PHIL 6710: Epistemic Modality

Time: Monday 4:30pm – 6:30pm, in GSH 156
Instructor: Wylie Breckenridge, breckenridge@cornell.edu
Website: www.people.cornell.edu/pages/jwb274/ (go to the ‘Teaching’ section)

Overview:

There has recently been much interest in what we mean by sentences such as ‘The keys might be in the kitchen’ – ones that we use to make claims about what is epistemically possible or necessary. We will consider in detail the issues involved.

Topics to be covered:

1. Modal versus non-modal claims
2. Ways of making modal claims
3. Modal force
4. Kinds of modality
5. Interaction with tense
6. Standard semantics
7. Problems for the standard semantics
8. Other approaches: relativism
9. Other approaches: danger
10. Other approaches: multiple speech acts
11. Other approaches: ambiguity by design
12. Other approaches: dynamic semantics
13. *Claims about personal taste
14. *Modals and disjunctions

Assessment:

One journal-style paper, 5000 words, due in the last class.

Reading List

- Moore, G. E. (1962), *Commonplace Book, 1919-1953* (London: Allen & Unwin).
Hacking, I. (1967), ‘Possibility’, *Philosophical Review* **76**, pp. 143-68.
Teller, P. (1972), ‘Epistemic Possibility’, *Philosophia* **2**, pp. 303-20.
Kratzer, A. (1977), ‘What ‘Must’ and ‘Can’ Must and Can Mean’, *Linguistics and Philosophy* **1**, 337-55.
Kratzer, A. (1981), ‘The Notional Category of Modality’, in H. J. Eikmeyer and H. Reiser (eds.), *Words, Worlds, and Contexts: New Approaches in Word Semantics* (Berlin: de Gruyter), pp. 38-74.
De Rose, K. (1991), ‘Epistemic Possibilities’, *Philosophical Review* **100**, pp. 581-605.
Kratzer, A. (1991), ‘Modality’, in A. von Stechow and D. Wunderlich (eds.), *Semantik: Ein Internationales Handbuch der Zeitgenössischen Forschung* (Berlin: de Gruyter).

- MacFarlane, J. (2003), 'Future contingents and relative truth', *Philosophical Quarterly* **53**, pp. 321–336.
- Egan, A., J. Hawthorne, and B. Weatherson (2005), 'Epistemic Modals in Context', in G. Preyer and G. Peter (eds.), *Contextualism in Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 131-68.
- MacFarlane, J. (2005), 'Making Sense of Relative Truth', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* **105**, pp. 321-39.
- Lasersohn, P. (2005), 'Context Dependence, Disagreement and Predicates of Personal Taste', *Linguistics and Philosophy* **28**, pp. 643-86.
- von Fintel, K. (2006), 'Modality and Language', in Donald M. Borchert (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Second Edition* (Detroit: MacMillan Reference USA).
- Heck, R. (2006), 'MacFarlane on Relative Truth', *Philosophical Issues* **16**, pp. 88-100.
- Papafragou, A. (2006), 'Epistemic modality and truth conditions', *Lingua* **116**, pp. 1688-1702.
- Egan, A. (2007), 'Epistemic Modals, Relativism, and Assertion', *Philosophical Studies* **133**, pp. 1-22.
- Von Fintel, K., and Gillies, A. (2007), 'An Opinionated Guide to Epistemic Modality', in Gendler & Hawthorne (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology 2*.
- Glanzberg, M. (2007), 'Context, Content, and Relativism', *Philosophical Studies* **136**, pp. 1-29.
- Hawthorne, J. (2007), 'Eavesdroppers and Epistemic Modals', *Philosophical Issues* **17**, pp. 92-101.
- Huemer, M. (2007), 'Epistemic Possibility', *Synthese* **156**, pp. 119-42.
- Stephenson, T. (2007), 'Judge Dependence, Epistemic Modals, and Predicates of Personal Taste', *Linguistics and Philosophy* **30**, pp. 487-525.
- Von Fintel, K., and Gillies, A. (2007b), 'Might Made Right'.
- Wright, C. (2007), 'New Age Relativism and Epistemic Possibility: The Question of Evidence', *Philosophical Issues* **17**.
- Yalcin, S. (2007), 'Epistemic Modals', *Mind* **116**, pp. 983-1026.
- Zimmerman, A. (2007), 'Against Relativism', *Philosophical Studies* **133**, pp. 313-48.
- Von Fintel, K., and Gillies, A. (2008), 'CIA Leaks', *Philosophical Review* **117**, pp. 77-98.
- MacFarlane, J. (2008), 'Epistemic Modals are Assessment-Sensitive', forthcoming in B. Weatherson and A. Egan (eds.), *Epistemic Modality* (OUP).
- Swanson, E. (2008), 'Modality in Language', *Philosophy Compass* **3**, pp. 1193-1207.