

Syllabus
PHIL 3011 (3 Cr.)
Philosophy of Possibility and Necessity
Fall 2018

Instructor: Dr. Kristopher G. Phillips
Office: 108F General Classrooms
Office Hours: M 4:00p-5:00p, T 12:00p-3:00p, W 2:00p-3:00p & also by appointment

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Class Meets: TR 3:00-4:15, GC 109

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Just about every day we talk about different things that are possible. When we do so, we often mean different things – whether it’s that things could have turned out different than they currently are, that we don’t *know* what the truth is (either now or in the future), or simply that some things can happen. Philosophers can often be heard to discuss “possible worlds” in logic, metaphysics, epistemology and so on. The flip side of possibility is necessity. Analytic philosophers in particular employ “necessity” with relative frequency. But what does any of this mean? In this class we will address the nature of possibility and necessity and their relation to one another in both historical and contemporary discourse.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- **Critical Thinking:** The successful student will begin to be able to differentiate between good and bad reasons for holding philosophical beliefs and will be able to seek out and identify the assumptions that lie at the basis of philosophical positions.
- **Inquiry and Analysis:** The successful student will begin to be able to break complex philosophical problems into their components, and will be able to identify the consequences and implications of philosophical positions.
- **Writing:** The successful student will be able to express some abstract and complex philosophical ideas in clear, precise, and logical prose.

Evaluation of these learning outcomes will be done through exams, papers, and in-class discussions.

TEXTS:

Leibniz and Clarke: *Correspondence*, ed. Ariew. Hackett Publishing, 2000. ISBN: 978-0-87220-524-6. **(LCC)**

Leibniz: *Philosophical Essays*, eds. Ariew & Garber. Hackett Publishing, 1989. ISBN: 978-0-87220-062-3

(PE)

Lewis: *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Blackwell Publishing, 1986. ISBN: 978-0-6312-2426-6 **(OPW)**

These can be found at the College Bookstore, and are *required*.

Materials not available in the required texts will be provided on Canvas.

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SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

This list of readings is tentative. Specific reading assignments will be given on a day-to-day basis.

Weeks 1-2

Introduction: What is Modality?

Kit Fine: *Varieties of Necessity* (Canvas)

Phillips: *Laying Bare the Space Open to Interpreters of Descartes's Creation Doctrine* (Canvas)

Weeks 3-8

Leibniz's "Possible Worlds"

Leibniz: *Second Letter* (LCC 7-11)

Clarke: *Second Reply* (LCC 11-14)

Leibniz: *Third Letter* (LCC 14-18)

Clarke: *Third Reply* (LCC 18-22)

Leibniz: *Fifth Letter* (LCC 36-66)

Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics* (PE 35-68)

Leibniz: *Monadology* (PE 213-225)

Leibniz: *On Freedom and Possibility* (PE 19-23)

Leibniz: *On Contingency* (PE 28-29)

Leibniz: *Primary Truths* (PE 30-34)

Leibniz: *The Source of Contingent Truths* (PE 98-100)

Leibniz: *Notes on Some Comments by Michelangelo Fardella* (PE 101-105)

Leibniz: *On the Ultimate Origination of Things* (PE 149-155)

[Mid-Term Exam]

Weeks 9-15

David Lewis's Modal Realism

Lewis: *Possible Worlds* (Canvas)

Lewis: *A Philosopher's Paradise* (OPW 1-96).

Lewis: *Paradox in Paradise?* (OPW 97-135)

Lewis: *Paradise on the Cheap?* (OPW 136-191)

Lewis: *Counterparts or Double Lives?* (OPW 192-263)

Armstrong: *Leibniz and Lewis on Modal Metaphysics and Fatalism* (Canvas)

[Final Exam]

ASSIGNMENTS, EVALUATION, POLICY:

Two Exams (60%; 30% for each exam) The exams will be take-home. You are to work alone; standard exam rules apply. More on this in class.

Ten Weekly Discussion Board Posts (15%) I expect you to keep up on the reading, and it *will* be challenging. To facilitate discussion and keep you on track, I expect you to complete at least 10 weekly discussion board posts. You may respond to a thread already going, or you may begin a discussion of your own. I expect these to be thoughtful, reflective, substantive posts. A question with no follow-up is not sufficient for your contribution. I would like to see careful engagement with the course material, but I'd also like to see you go *beyond* the class discussion. These may be critical or clarificatory, but must not be a mere summary of what you've read (though you will likely have to offer some interpretation as set-up for your post).

Ideally you will engage with your classmates in addition to sharing your own insights into the material.

You must make your post by 7:00p on Sunday otherwise the post will count toward the following week.

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Term Paper (25%) You will be expected to complete a term paper on any topic relevant to the philosophy of modality. You are not limited to topics that we discuss explicitly in class, and you are welcome (and encouraged) to do research beyond the texts. Your paper should be between 2000-3000 words.

NOTE: I can and will feel free to utilize turnitin.com to ensure the originality of your work. As such, I will require at least an electronic copy of your paper, and probably a hard copy as well.

Late Work: I will accept late exams, but for each 24-hour period that the paper is late, the grade will be reduced by 4%. I will not accept late weekly posts.

Grade Disputes: If you feel that your work has been unfairly assessed, you may ask that I reconsider. I am, after all, a human who makes mistakes on occasion. I will do so **only if** you submit to me, on paper, a one-paragraph typewritten explanation of why you believe that your work has been unfairly evaluated. You must indicate the grade you believe yourself to deserve and explain clearly why it is that you deserve that grade. Your dispute must be submitted within **one week** of receiving your grade.

Attendance: Excessive absences (6 or more) will hurt you 1 letter grade (as in A- to B-). Philosophy is hard even if you come to class. Skip at your own risk. You are responsible for information that I offer in lecture that is not in the readings.

Extra Credit and Final Grades: I will *not*, under any circumstances, offer extra credit. If you are concerned about your grade, come to my office hours. Please do so before the end of the semester. With regard to final grades, you will get the grade you have earned. Asking me to bump, round up, or otherwise adjust your final grade will guarantee that I will NOT adjust your final grade. Please do not ask.

Plagiarism or academic fraud of any sort will result in an F for the course. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter. Please familiarize yourself with Southern Utah University's *Student Handbook*, which you can find online at <https://www.suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP633Academic.pdf>. I will follow the regulations described in this document for dealing with cheating, plagiarism, etc. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism or academic fraud after reading through the student handbook, please do not hesitate to ask me for further clarification.

Disabilities: I warmly welcome any of you who have disabilities. Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations, or auxiliary aids must contact the Office for Students with Disabilities. The Office for Students with Disabilities determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of these services and aids. Reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if requests are made in a timely manner, with appropriate documentation, in accordance with federal, state, and University guidelines. For Southern Utah University's full policy, see: <http://suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP119Disability.pdf>.

Emergency Management: In case of emergency, the University's Emergency Notification System (ENS) will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the mySUU portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Response Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan can be found at <http://suu.edu/emergency>.

HEOA Compliance: The sharing of copyrighted material through peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, except as provided under U.S. copyright law, is prohibited by law.