

Periodic Evaluation for FIL 4400 - Logic and philosophy of language

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Emnebeskrivelsen for emnet.

The course will focus on Timothy Williamson's book *Modal Logic as Metaphysics* (OUP, 2013). The book is available on Oxford Scholarship Online (access via UiO Library), but it is probably worth investing in a hard copy. All further readings are available as pdfs on Fronter.

The first two sessions will be taught by Agustín Rayo. They will be based on readings by Lewis, Rayo and Stalnaker, and introduce the topics discussed in MLaM (*Modal Logic as Metaphysics*).

The remaining sessions will be taught by Peter Fritz; each of them will be based on sections from MLaM and short further background readings. Most sessions will consist of a lecture and a student presentation. The lectures will review the relevant sections of MLaM and, in particular, go through the formal development. Lecture notes on the formal definitions and results will be made available; these will contain assignments to be completed and handed in roughly every other week. Student presentations are based on the relevant sections from MLaM and additional readings; they are assigned on a first-come first-served basis.

Statistikk over karakterer, frafall, klager (for eksempel FS-rapport 754.001).

8 students attended most of the classes. Of these, 7 were registered to take the course for credit, all of which satisfied the requirements of being able to submit the final essay (see below). 5 students submitted final essay. The distribution of grades was as follows:

A: 2 students
B: 1 student
C: 1 student
D: 1 student

Studenttilbakemeldinger/underveisevaluering av emnet.

An expanded version of the standard questionnaire was handed out in the last class; 5 evaluations were received. The expanded questionnaire asked more specific questions, but in the case of each student, the answers show that the student agreed or strongly agreed with the claim that they were satisfied with the course. The main suggestion, which each student expressed (in different forms), was that the course could be improved by putting more emphasis on the formal material on modal logic.

1.

The course was mainly based on the book *Modal Logic as Metaphysics*, which was expected to be read in its entirety. Additional background readings were given as well, although this added up to less than 800 pages.

The course consisted of 14 2-hour classes; with the first week containing two classes and the other classes being given once a week. The two classes in the first week were given by Agustin Rayo, and served as an introduction to the topic. The rest of the class was given by Peter Fritz, mostly according to the following schema: The first hour was taken up by a lecture on the logical material of the section of *Modal Logic as Metaphysics* read by the students beforehand. In the second hour, a student would present additional material, often based on readings in addition to the book and the background readings mentioned above. The rest of the class would be taken up by discussion, mainly of the philosophical aspects of the material covered. Students were also required to submit at least four out of five logic exercises, which were to be submitted roughly every other week.

Students who had given a presentation and submitted at least four logic exercises were allowed to submit a final essay. The topic of this essay was open, although it had to be connected to the topic of the course, and was required to be of about 10 pages in length.

Most of the components of the course worked well, in particular the choice of the book; the lectures, which were based on detailed handouts; the logic exercises; and the final essay. What did not work well were the student presentations and the subsequent discussion. Student presentations were often of not given well (not due to lack of effort, but lack of ability/experience), and students were very reluctant to enter into any kind of discussion.

2. Gir læringsutbytteformuleringene i emnebeskrivelsen en god beskrivelse av hva studentene skal kunne etter avlagt eksamen?

The formulation is very general, but since the course contents varies greatly from year to year, it seems appropriate.

3. Fungerer emnebeskrivelsen tilfredsstillende?

As far as I can see, these are all appropriate.

4. Har du gjort noen endringer siden forrige periodiske evaluering? Hvilke?

The previous course was given by someone else on a different topic.

5. Forslag til forbedringer.

All students struggled with giving presentations, and some had difficulties writing a clear and structured essay, so there may be a need for teaching students how to present and how to write. I don't know what form this could take. Students were also very reluctant to contribute actively to classes. Partly, this was my fault, as I was not aware that this would be an issue and so didn't structure classes in order to emphasize the importance of discussion. Partly, there seems to be a general attitude of students that active participation in classes is optional; such a general attitude is hard to change.

A general comment: After teaching most of the course, I was sent the previous periodic evaluation, which describes many of the same challenges I found. It might be worth sending someone who teaches a course for the first time the previous periodic evaluation when they are assigned the course, so that they can take previous experiences into account when planning the course.