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Keynote Address

Friday, October 7, 5:00-6:30pm
University Center – Room 302, Theatre

Modal Empiricism: What is the Problem?

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In his introduction to the first *Critique*, Kant contends that necessity is a criterion of the a priori—that is, that all knowledge of necessary propositions is a priori. This contention, together with two others that Kant took to be evident—we know some mathematical propositions and such propositions are necessary—leads directly to the conclusion that some knowledge is a priori. Although many contemporary philosophers endorse Kant's criterion, supporting arguments are hard to come by. Gordon Barnes provides one of the few examples. My purpose in this paper is to articulate and examine his argument. I have two goals in doing so. The first is to uncover several significant gaps in the argument. The second is to show that it suffers from a common defect in rationalist arguments. If the argument were successful against empiricist accounts of modal knowledge, it would apply with equal force to extant rationalist accounts of such knowledge. Hence, the cost of refuting modal empiricism is modal scepticism.

Professor Casullo teaches graduate courses in epistemology. He is a widely published philosopher with numerous prestigious awards and honors. He earned his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Iowa in 1975. His publications focus on a priori knowledge, modal knowledge and intuitions. He is the author of *A Priori Justification* (2003, 2005) and *Essays on A Priori Knowledge and Justification* (2012, 2014), and also the co-editor of *The A Priori in Philosophy* (2013) – all published by the Oxford University Press.