

Phil 190: David Lewis

Spring 2014

Tue. and Thurs., 12–1:45pm.

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To send a push notification to my cell phone, you can use the Notify Abe service (not a joke, see <http://notifyabe1.appspot.com>).

Website: <http://people.ucsc.edu/~abestone/courses>

Open Facebook group: UCSC Phil 190 Spring 2014

Office hours: Tues. 4–6pm

Description

David Lewis (1941–2001) is by far the most important member of the school or field now known as Analytic metaphysics, and, in my opinion, a very important philosopher generally speaking. He is best known as a proponent of “modal realism,” that is, the view that there (literally) are other possible worlds, besides the actual one.

I have divided the reading into three parts, by a division whose validity I don’t feel entirely certain about, but which seemed convenient. The first part introduces modal realism and the other basic views which go along with it to determine the structure of Lewis’s metaphysical system. The second part focuses on Lewis’s thought about the nature of philosophical speech, conversation, and argument, in part so we can see more clearly what he might think he was doing, and why, in maintaining such views. The third part introduces some less-basic metaphysical apparatus and applications of the basic apparatus to specific topics, all centered around Lewis’s version of the traditional metaphysical tasks, to provide a foundation for the (special) sciences and demonstrate generally the possibility of language and thought.

A good deal of mostly recent historical background would be helpful in understanding better what Lewis is up to. I ended up limiting this, in the assigned reading, to a few pieces by Carnap and Quine, but many of their other writings would be relevant, in addition to the writings of many other recent philosophers — Davidson, Goodman, Kripke, Montague, Putnam, and many others. I will be semi-happy to suggest appropriate extra reading to interested students.

Course Requirements

Seminar participation (10%). Two 2 page response/analysis papers (15% each), on a rotating basis:

Group I (Boudreau, Cespedes Van Den Bergh, Charette, Clark): Apr. 10, May 8

Group II (Dunne, Garnica, Hahm, Huang): Apr. 17, May 15

Group III (Johnson, Lesueur, Lievsay, Mahallati): Apr. 24, May 22
Group IV (O’Neill, Parra, Shelling, Swart, Titone, Digal): May 1, May 29.
Final paper, 6–12 pages (60%), due Tues., Jun. 10.

All assignments will be available on-line, and there will be links to them from this syllabus as well as from my main course page. I will discuss the assignments in class when the due date draws near. You can find answers to some commonly asked questions about my assignments and grading here: <http://people.ucsc.edu/~abestone/courses/faq.html>.

Papers are to be handed in, as attachments, via the “Assignments” tool on ecommons. Please submit in PDF, or in a format easily convertible to PDF (e.g., MSWord, plain text or RTF). The system will accept late submissions, but late papers may not receive full credit. The system is *not* set up to allow resubmissions: once you press the “submit” button, it will not let you change your response. If, however, you mistakenly submit something and want to change it, please contact me and I can make an exception.

All assignments are due by midnight on the due date.

Texts

Readings are from the following books by Lewis: *Philosophical Papers* (vols. 1 and 2) (1983, 1986); *On the Plurality of Worlds* (1986); *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology* (1999); *Papers in Ethics and Social Philosophy* (2000). I have not ordered copies of these because they are fairly expensive and we will have only selected readings from each (but they are available on-line if you want to purchase them). These readings, as well as the those from Carnap and Quine, will be made available on eCommons), and the books, along with a few other books by Lewis, will be on reserve at McHenry.

Readings

Tues., Apr. 1: no reading, first class.

Basic system

Thurs., Apr. 3: “Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic,” with postscripts (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 26–46) (note: this is probably the most technically challenging reading we will have, but, I think, necessary).

Tues., Apr. 8: *On the Plurality of Worlds*, §§1.3 (pp. 20–27), 1.6–8 (pp. 69–92).

Thurs., Apr. 10: *On the Plurality of Worlds*, §1.9 (pp. 92–6); §2.1 (pp. 97–101); §2.4 (pp. 108–15), §2.8 (pp. 133–5). First short writing assignment (for students in Group I *only*) due.

Tues., Apr. 15: **no class** due to the first day of Passover.

Thurs., Apr. 17: *On the Plurality of Worlds*, §§3.1–2 (pp. 136–165). Second short writing assignment (for students in Group II *only*) due.

Tues., Apr. 22: (The class originally scheduled for this date has been rescheduled due to the last day of Passover, see below).

Wed., Apr. 23 (at noon in Merrill 002): *On the Plurality of Worlds*, §§4.1–3 (pp. 192–220). A video of this class is available on YouTube for those who missed it.¹

Methodology

Thurs., Apr. 24: Carnap, “Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology”; Quine, “On Carnap’s Views on Ontology”; Carnap, reply to Quine’s “Carnap and Logical Truth.” Third short writing assignment (for students in Group III *only*) due.

Tues., Apr. 29: Introduction to *Philosophical Papers*, volume I (pp. ix–xii); “Holes” (with Stephanie Lewis) (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 3–9).

Thurs., May 1: “Languages and Language” (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 163–188). Fourth short writing assignment (for students in Group IV *only*) due.

Tues., May 6: “Scorekeeping in a Language Game” (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 233–49).

Thurs., May 8: “Academic appointments: Why ignore the advantage of being right?” (*Papers in Ethics*, pp. 187–200); “Noneism or Allism?” (*Papers in Metaphysics*, pp. 152–63). Fifth short writing assignment (for students in Group I *only*) due.

The possibility of science and of meaningful thought

Tues., May 13: Carnap, *Aufbau*, §§1–2, 14–16, 61–4, 67, 75–8, 124–6, 153–5, 165; “Meaning and Synonymy in Natural Languages”; Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” §5; “Ontological Relativity.”

¹At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJGMAFsdX00>.

Thurs., May 15: “New Work for a Theory of Universals,” beginning (*Papers in Metaphysics*, pp. 8–25, through end of the section titled “ONE OVER MANY”). Sixth short writing assignment (for students in Group II *only*) due.

Tues., May 20: “New Work for a Theory of Universals,” end (*Papers in Metaphysics*, pp. 25–55).

Thurs., May 22: “Causation” (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 159–72; postscripts, pp. 172–213, recommended but not required). Seventh short writing assignment (for students in Group III *only*) due.

Tues., May 27: “How to Define Theoretical Terms” (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 78–95).

Thurs., May 29: “Radical Interpretation,” with postscripts (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 108–21). Eighth short writing assignment (for students in Group IV *only*) due.

Tues., Jun. 3: “Putnam’s Paradox,” (*Papers in Metaphysics*, pp. 56–77).

Thurs., Jun. 5: **no class** due to Shavuot.

Tues., Jun. 10: **final paper due**.