Phil 290P: David Lewis
Fall, 2018

Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-3:05pm, Hum 1 400

Contact Information

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Course 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. You should be prepared to ask at least one brief question about the reading, or make at least one brief comment about it or one brief objection to it.

One in-class presentation (approximately 15 minutes). The presentation should be aimed at getting seminar discussion started on a certain day.

One final paper (approximately 15–20 pages), due Wednesday, December 12 (via the Assignments tool on Canvas, on a topic related to the course to be determined by the student (with advice from the instructor if desired).

You can find answers to some commonly asked questions about my assignments and grading in my FAQ (`http://people.ucsc.edu/~abestone/courses/faq.html`).

Texts

Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2001) (ISBN: 978-0631224266).

The above text will be available at the Literary Guillotine. The remaining readings are from the following books by Lewis: *Convention* (1969); *Philosophical Papers* (vols. 1 and 2) (1983, 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). The readings from these, as well as the Carnap and Quine readings, will be made available on Canvas, and all the books will be on reserve at McHenry.

Readings

Thursday, September 27: (no reading, first class).

Basic system

Tuesday, October 2: **no class** due to Simchat Torah.

Thursday, October 4: "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.

Tuesday, October 9: *On the Plurality of Worlds*, §§1.3 (pp. 20–27), 1.6–8 (pp. 69–96).

Thursday, October 11: *On the Plurality of Worlds*, §1.9; §2.1 (pp. 97–101); §2.4 (pp. 108–15), §2.8 (pp. 133-5).

Tuesday, October 16: *On the Plurality of Worlds*, §3.1–2 (pp. 136–165).

Thursday, October 18: *On the Plurality of Worlds*, §§§4.1–3 (pp. 192–220).

Methodology

Tuesday, October 23: Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology"; Quine, "On Carnap's Views on Ontology"; Carnap, reply to Quine's "Carnap and Logical Truth."

Thursday, October 25: Introduction to *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1 (pp. x–xii); "Holes" (with Stephanie Lewis) (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 3–9); *On the Plurality of Worlds*, §1.1 (pp. 1–5).

Tuesday, October 30: "Languages and Language" (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 163–188).

Thursday, November 1: *Convention*, ch. 3.1–4 (pp. 83–107) and 3.6 (pp. 118–121).

Tuesday, November 6: "Scorekeeping in a Language Game" (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 233–49).

Thursday, November 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).

The possibility of science and of meaningful thought

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

Thursday, November 15: "New Work for a Theory of Universals," beginning (*Papers in Metaphysics*, pp. 8-25, through the end of the section titled "ONE OVER MANY").

Tuesday, November 20: "New Work for a Theory of Universals," end (*Papers in Metaphysics*, pp. 25–55).

Thursday, November 22: **No class (Thanksgiving)**

Tuesday, November 27: "Causation" (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 2, pp. 159–72; postscripts, pp. 172–213, recommended but not required).

Thursday, November 29: "How to Define Theoretical Terms" (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 78–95).

Tuesday, December 4: "Radical Interpretation," with postscripts (*Phil. Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 108–21).

Thursday, December 6: "Putnam's Paradox," (*Papers in Metaphysics*, pp. 56–77).

Wednesday, December 12: **final paper due**.