

Philosophy 552S
The Philosophy of David Lewis

Professor: Sara Bernstein (sara.bernstein@duke.edu)

Special Guest: Peter van Inwagen

M 10:05-12:35 West Duke 204

The work of David K. Lewis (1941-2001) sets the agenda for many contemporary subfields of philosophy. This seminar is an overview of the work of David Lewis, including his metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of language.

This course will presuppose neither knowledge of the above areas nor antecedent understanding of the work of David Lewis. Instead, it will function as a high-level introduction to the key topics in those fields through his work. We will begin each class with an overview of the topic at hand, proceed to Lewis' approach to the topic, and then examine responses to Lewis' views.

Course Requirements:

For undergraduate students:

weekly well-formed questions (30%)
one 8-10 page term paper (40%)
class participation (30%)

For graduate students:

weekly well-formed questions (30%)
one in-class presentation on a course reading (10%)
one presentation on your own term paper and term paper (40%)
class participation (20%)

Required Texts:

- David Lewis, *Plurality of Worlds*
- Daniel Nolan, *David Lewis*
- course website: <http://people.duke.edu/~sb192/DKL/dkl.html>

Recommended Texts:

- David Lewis, *Collected Papers*, Vol II
- *Lewisian Themes*, eds. Jackson and Priest

Schedule:

Wednesday, January 9: Introduction to the Philosophy of David Lewis

- Ned Hall, "David Lewis' Metaphysics"

Recommended: Daniel Nolan, *David Lewis*, pp. 5-26

Monday, January 14: Ontology

- David and Steffi Lewis, "Holes"
- David Lewis, "Many, But Almost One"

Monday, January 21: MLK Day. No class.

Monday, January 28: Modality: Modal Realism

- *Plurality of Worlds* 1.1 ("The Thesis of Plurality of Worlds") and 1.8 ("Plentitude")
- Optional: Jennifer Wang, "From Combinatorialism to Primitivism"

Monday, February 4: Causation

- Lewis, "Causation as Influence"
- Michael Strevens, "Against Lewis' New Theory of Causation"

Recommended: Daniel Nolan, *David Lewis*, pp. 89-96

Monday, February 11: Modality: Similarity Metrics for Possible Worlds

- Lewis, "Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow"
- Daniel Nolan, *David Lewis*, pp. 96-11

Optional: David Van der Laan, "Counterpossibles and Similarity"

February 18: Mereology

- Lewis, *Parts of Classes* (excerpt)
- Karen Bennett, "Perfectly Understood, Unproblematic, and Certain: Lewis on Mereology"

February 25: Time and Persistence

- Lewis, *Plurality of Worlds* pp. 202-204 ("Against Overlap," excerpt)
- Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel"

March 4: Properties and Humean Supervenience

- Lewis, "New Work for a Theory of Universals"
- Brian Weatherson, "Humean Supervenience"

March 11: Spring Break. No class.

March 18: Metaphysics of Mind

- Lewis, "Mad Pain and Martian Pain"
- Lewis, "What Experience Teaches"

March 25: Philosophy of Mind

- Lewis, "Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*"
- Rae Langton, "Ethics and Imagining *De Se*"

Recommended: Daniel Nolan, *David Lewis*, "Representation and Mental Content" (136-142)

April 1: Quantum Mechanics

- Lewis, "How Many Lives Has Schrodinger's Cat?"
- David Papineau, "David Lewis and Schrodinger's Cat"

April 8: Philosophy of Language

- Lewis, "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"
- Karen Lewis, "Discourse dynamics, pragmatics, and indefinites"

April 15: NO CLASS. Makeup session Monday, April 29.

April 22: Ethics

- Lewis, "Devil's Bargains and the Real World"
- Lewis "Illusory Innocence"

April 29: Review, Student Presentations

A few notes concerning...

Plagiarism

Don't do it. It's wrong, it's lazy, and it's antithetical to everything a college education is about. Also, it hurts my feelings.

Extensions

Ask.

Syllabus Changes

It is possible that topics will be added, removed, or changed on the syllabus. If this happens, it will be announced in class and over email.

Ways to Reach Sara, or her Indistinguishable Robot Clone:

Email: sara.bernstein@duke.edu

Office Hours: 201G West Duke, Wednesdays 11am-12pm, or by appointment.

Transworld communication with an on-call counterpart: always.