# The Philosophy of David Lewis

Spring Semester 2021: Mondays 1-4 (Online)

## Course Description

David Lewis was one of the most important philosophers and the greatest analytic metaphysician of the 20th century. Aside from metaphysics, he made important contributions to philosophy of language, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophical logic, decision theory, and philosophy of mind. It is not possible to understand current debates among philosophers in these (and other) areas without knowing his work. My aims in this seminar is to acquaint you with some of that work with an idea to understanding Lewis’ views about reality and to the nature of philosophy.

We will begin with Lewis famous paper on functionalism and the identity theory of mind. After that we will dive into his work in metaphysics of modality and the metaphysical foundations of science. If there is time, we will discuss his work in philosophy of language and epistemology.

## Required Reading

The readings for the course will be Lewis’ book *Plurality of Worlds* and *David Lewis* by Daniel Nolanand selections from his Collected papers and papers by others regarding the issues Lewis discusses. Everything will be available on-line for free! All of Lewis’ papers can be found online at <http://www.andrewmbailey.com/dkl/>

## Recommended Reading

Companion to David Lewis, ed. Barry Loewer and Jonathan Shaffer

Course Requirements

1) attending each online session

2) weekly well-formed questions (30%)

3) 8-15 page term paper (40%)

4) class participation including presenting one reading (30%)

## Syllabus (tentative)

**Jan 25:** Frederique Janssen-Lauret, “The Quinean Roots of Lewis’s Humeanism” https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/47877681/QuineanHumeanism.pdf

Ned Hall, “David Lewis’ Metaphysics” https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/34611680/DKL%20part%201.pdf?sequence=2

Daniel Nolan, David Lewis, pp. 5-26, Stephanie Lewis, Intellectual Biography of David Lewis.

http://www.andrewmbailey.com/dkl/Bio.pdf

**Feb 1:** Lewis “An Argument for the Identity Theory”; Lewis “Mad Pain and Martian Pain”; Levin “Functionalism” https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/functionalism/#:~:text=Functionalism%20in%20the%20philosophy%20of,which%20it%20is%20a%20part.

**Feb 8:** Ch 2 Nolan The Humean Mosaic, Lewis Intro to Vol II, Loewer “Humean Supervenience”

**Feb 15:** Possible Worlds: Nolan ch 3 Plenitude of Possibilities Lewis *Plurality of Worlds* chs 1-3

**Feb 22:** Possible Worlds continued: Nolan ch 3 Lewis Plurality continued

**March 1:** Counterfactuals: Lewis “Counterfactuals and Time’s Arrow”; Loewer “Counterfactuals and the Second Law”

**March 8:** Causation

**March 22:** Chance: “A Subjectivist’s Guide to Objective Chance”

**March 29:** “Are we Free to Break the Laws”

**April 5:** Paradoxes of Time Travel

**April 12**: Lewis’ book *Convention*; **paper topic due**

**April 19:** *Convention*

**April 26:** *Convention*

**May 3:**

**May 10:** **paper due**