

Jan.-Apr. 2011. Philosophy 5700, The Philosophy of David K. Lewis (1941-2001). Arthur Falk, updated 1/11/2011

I believe David Lewis was the most important philosopher of the last third of the twentieth century. For evidence of this claim, go to <http://plato.stanford.edu>, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. If you type "David Lewis" (in quotation marks like that) into the search box, you will see not only an article devoted to him, but references to his work in a hundred other articles.

We will read not quite two dozen of his most significant articles over a wide range of areas, and follow-up work by a few others. Some require considerable background in logic and probability theory and familiarity with the dialectical scene in Anglophone philosophy during the late 20th century. I will provide that.

The first thing we will read is in *Philosophical Papers* vol 1: "How to Define Theoretical Terms." Two other articles in that volume concern Lewis's application of his account to philosophy of mind, and we will read them also: "An Argument for the Identity Theory" and "Mad Pain and Martian Pain." In *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*, read "Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications" and "Reduction of Mind." A book I recommend is David Braddon-Mitchell and Robert Nola, *Conceptual Analysis and Philosophical Naturalism* (MIT 2009). The introduction to that book tells how Lewis's account of definition has spawned a movement called the Canberra Plan, and I recommend reading that. The book also contains a Lewis article, "Ramseyan Humility" which is connected to his account of definition. I recommend that too. Since mind-body dualism is an issue, we will read Lewis's reply to Frank Jackson's what-Mary-knows argument for dualism: "What Experience Teaches" in *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*, which we will read. Jackson conceded that Lewis was correct in his conclusion, but failed to support it with a sufficient argument, in his "Mind and Illusion," in *Minds and Persons: Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 53. (More developed is Jackson's "The Knowledge Argument, Diaphanousness, Representationalism" in Alter and Walter, eds., *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge* (2007). I recommend that. We will end January with "Attitudes de Dicto and de Se" in *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1.

Since attitudes de se account for our sense of nowness and its ephemerality (the flow of time), we should probably read from *Philosophical Papers*, vol 1, postscript B to "Survival and Identity"; in *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*, "Rearrangement of Particles: Reply to Lowe"; and "Tensing the copula," *Mind*, vol. 111 (2002).

February will be devoted to the subjective (personalist) interpretation of probability and decision theories. Given the subjectivist interpretation, "degree of credence," there are diachronic as well as synchronic versions of the theories, which I will introduce. Read Lewis's "Why Conditionalize?" in *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*. Next we study the relation of degrees of credence to the objective chance interpretation of probability. We read the introduction to *Philosophical Papers*, vol. II, then "The Subjectivist's Guide to Objective Chance" in that volume. Then we will move on to a collection of three papers in *Mind*, vol 103 (1994). One is Lewis's "Humean Supervenience Debugged" which is in *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*. The other two are by Ned Hall and Michael Thau. (You will see references to infinitesimals and nonstandard analysis in Lewis. An excellent introduction to the concepts and an application to the arrow paradox appears in Wm. McLaughlin, "Resolving Zeno's Paradoxes" in *Scientific American*, Nov. 1994. It is a popularization of McLaughlin and Miller, "An Epistemological Use of Nonstandard Analysis to Answer Zeno's Objections Against Motion" in *Synthese* 92 (1992) 371-384.) We will transition into causality and counterfactuals in March, by way of "Prisoners' Dilemma is a Newcomb Problem" and "Causal Decision Theory" in *Collected Papers* vol. II. For an exchange of letters between Stalnaker and Lewis, from which causal decision theory arose, see the book, Harper, Stalnaker, and Pearce, eds., *Ifs*, (1981).

I will choose the readings for the second half of the term later. An introduction to a counterfactual logic, formulated as a natural deduction system, can be found in Daniel Bonevac, *Deduction* (1987), ch. 10.

As for Lewis's most notorious thesis, I only get into modal realism insofar as it is really indispensable for these topics, and I think we can largely avoid it.

Your grade for the course will be based on class participation, at least two class reports (20%) and two papers (40% each), to be written according to the guidelines for papers posted on my homepage. Paper length depends on the number of credits for the course. Due date for the first paper is March 8, for the second paper the last day of class before the finals week. An A grade requires 90%; BA, 87%; B, 80%; etc.