

# The Philosophy of David Lewis

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Office Hour: Tuesday 1pm

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Lectures:

The lectures will provide overviews of the module topics and general background for the assigned readings.

### Seminars:

The seminars will consist of group discussions of the assigned readings.

### Module content and learning outcomes:

This module will aim to give students a basic understanding of David Lewis's philosophical views in metaphysics, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and epistemology. The course aims to view Lewis's contributions in a broadly methodological way, by focusing on several big themes in his work and looking at how these themes resurface in a range of areas. The themes we will focus on are (1) Ramsification and functional definition, (2) the doctrine of Humean supervenience, and (3) the doctrine of modal realism.

By the end of the course, students should be familiar how Lewis deploys Ramsification and functional definition in the philosophy of mind and language, and how they are used to locate mentality and language in the fundamental. They should understand his basic view of mental content and the attitudes, and how it builds on his account of the metaphysics of modality. They should understand his account of convention and his idea of the conversational scoreboard, which build on his account of mental states. Finally, they should also understand the basic components of his metaphysics, including the nature of properties, causation, and naturalness, and his basic view of counterfactuals, which figures prominently in many of these issues. We will also touch on his views on chance and knowledge.

## ASSESSMENT

Two short papers, 1000 words each, each worth 20% of the total mark.

One long paper, 4000 words, worth 60% of the total mark.

## WEEKLY READINGS

### Week 1: Humean Supervenience

- Humean Supervenience debugged (1994)

- Introduction to *Philosophical Papers, Vol. II* (1986)

Optional: Brian Weatherson, "Humean Supervenience"

## **Week 2: Naturalness**

- New Work for a Theory of Universals (1983)

- Putnam's Paradox (1984)

Optional: Frederique Janssen-Lauret and Fraser MacBride: Lewis's Global Descriptivism and Reference Magnetism (2020)

Jared Warren: Reference Magnetism Does Not Exist (2023)

## **Week 3: Modality**

- *On the Plurality of Worlds* (1986) (excerpts)

Suggested: Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic (1970)

## **Week 4: Ramsification and Reduction**

- How to define theoretical terms (1970)

- An argument for the identity theory (1966)

Suggested: Naming the Colors (1997)

## **Week 5: The Nature of Mind**

- Psychophysical and Theoretical Identifications (1972)

- Mad Pain and Martian Pain (1980)

-Optional: Janet Levin: Analytic Functionalism and the Reduction of Phenomenal States (1991)

## **Week 6: Attitudes**

- Radical Interpretation (1974)

- Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*

-Optional: Frank Jackson and Daniel Stoljar: Understanding Self-Ascription (2020)

## **Week 6: Counterfactuals**

- *Counterfactuals* (1973) (excerpts)

- Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow (1979)

## **Week 7: Causation**

- Causation (1973)

- Causal Explanation (1976)

- Events (1986)

Optional: Causation as Influence (2000)

## **Week 8: Truth and Truthmaking**

- Truthmaking and difference-making (2001)

## **Week 9: Language**

- Languages and Language (1975)

- Scorekeeping in a language game (1979)

-Optional: Jessica Keiser: On Meaning without Use (2021)

## **Week 10: Knowledge**

- Elusive Knowledge (1996)

## **Week 11: Chance**

- A Subjectivist's Guide to Objective Chance (1980)

**Resources:**

Besides the Main Library, online texts: to find electronic journals and books, search in the library catalog <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/> . There are several useful online encyclopedias that can provide you with introductions to topics as well as some technical details. Your most precious tool is the the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <https://plato.stanford.edu/>: some of its entries will be mandatory readings for this module (see below). Other useful resources include the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy <https://iep.utm.edu/> and Philosophy Compass <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/17479991> .

**Research tools:**

PhilPapers <https://philpapers.org/> and Google Scholar <https://scholar.google.co.uk/> can direct you to books, articles, authors, citations of those authors, etc. They provide a good way to find out if a publication has generated discussion in the philosophical literature.

There are a also huge number of resources that can help you learn about Lewis. Perhaps first among them is a bibliography of most of Lewis's works, with links to each listed article:

<https://andrewmbailey.com/dkl/>

There are also several helpful encyclopedia entries:

“David Lewis's Metaphysics”, Ned Hall, Brian Rabern, and Wolfgang Schwarz:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/lewis-metaphysics/index.html>

“David Lewis”, Brian Weatherson: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/david-lewis/#5>

