

# The Philosophy of David Lewis

**Course organizer:** [Brian Rabern](#)

**Course description:** David Lewis (1941–2001) was one of the most important philosophers of the 20th Century. He made significant contributions to philosophy of language, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of science, decision theory, epistemology, meta-ethics and aesthetics, and most significantly to philosophy of mind and metaphysics. Despite the wide range of issues addressed in Lewis' work there is a unifying method and systematicity. This course is intended to provide an introduction to some of Lewis' key contributions by focusing on a selection of his writings. This will cover various topics such as personal identity, de se content, contextualism about knowledge, metaphysics, counterfactuals, counterpart theory, scorekeeping in a language game, etc. The course is oriented around a single philosopher and his work, but attention will also be given to the connections between Lewis' philosophy and the enduring problems of traditional philosophy.

**Core reading:**

- David Lewis, 1983, *Philosophical Papers*, Volume I, Oxford University Press.
- Daniel Nolan, 2005, *David Lewis*, Routledge.
- [David Lewis](#), Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.



|    | Weekly reading   |
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| 1  | Stephanie Lewis, " <a href="#">Intellectual Biography of David Lewis</a> " |
| 2  | (1970) "Anselm and Actuality"  |
| 3  | (1970) "Holes" (with Stephanie Lewis)                                      |
| 4  | (1976) "Survival and Identity"   |
| 5  | (1978) "Truth in Fiction"  |
| 6  | (1979) "Attitudes De Dicto and De Se"                                      |
| 7  | (1979) "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"                                   |
| 8  | (1988) "What Experience Teaches"   |
| 9  | (1996) "Elusive Knowledge"   |
| 10 | (1993) "Many, But Almost One"  |
| 11 | Daniel Nolan, " <a href="#">Lewis's Philosophical Method</a> "             |

**Assessment:**

- 50%: Five essays of 300 words (10% each).
- 50%: Final essay of 2500 words

**Resources:**

- [David Lewis Papers Online](#)
- [David Lewis Search](#)
- PhilPapers: [David Lewis](#)
- Philosopher Zone: [The many worlds of David Lewis](#)
- Lewis presenting "Finkish Dispositions" ([video](#))
- Lewis presenting "What Experience Teaches" ([audio](#))

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<http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/19-20/dpt/cxphil10184.htm>

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