

Metaphysics (015.258)
Fall 2003

Time: MWF 12:30 PM – 1:20 PM (subject to change)
Location: 241 University College
Instructor: Ben Caplan
Office: 468 University College
Office Hour: M 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM, or by appointment
Phone: 204.474.9115
Email: ben_caplan@umanitoba.ca
Webpage: http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~caplanbd/015_258

Description

The course won't be historical. Our starting point will be David Lewis's *On the Plurality of Worlds*, which was first published in 1986. We won't read much written before 1986, and we'll read a number of things that haven't been published yet.

The course won't be comprehensive. We'll cover three topics: modality, persistence, and material constitution. (If there were time—which there won't be—we'd cover a fourth topic: time.) On each topic, we'll consider two (or at most three) views: what David Lewis thinks, on the one hand, and what most philosophers who aren't David Lewis think, on the other.

The course won't be easy. We will be reading material written by specialists for specialists, and the topics they specialize in—the topics we'll cover—are difficult. Among other things, the topics will demand a great deal of technical precision.

Readings

You will need to purchase two things from the bookstore:

1. David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1986).
2. A course reader.

In addition, a number of the readings will be available only electronically. Links will be provided from the course website.

Requirements

Your grade will be based on three problem sets, each worth 33.3% of your final grade. The first problem set will be due around 8 October 2003; the second, around 5 November 2003; and the third, around 10 December 2003. You will have a week to complete each problem set. Exact due dates will be announced in class as we proceed. You will need to complete all of the problem sets to pass the course.

In this course, percentages will be converted into letter grades according to the following scheme.

A+	95-100
A	85-94
B+	80-84
B	70-79
C+	65-69
C	55-64
D	45-54
F	0-44

Late Policy

I will accept problem sets up to 48 hours late. But you will be penalized $\frac{1}{2}$ a letter grade per day; **and you can't hand problem sets in any later than that.** You need to complete all the problem sets to pass the course. So, if one of your problem sets is more than 48 hours late, then you won't pass the course.

Exceptions can be made in the case of documented medical, psychological, or other exceptionally dire emergencies.

A Warning about Academic Dishonesty

It is difficult to overstate the importance of academic honesty. Penalties for academic dishonesty range from getting an F on the assignment to getting an F for the course, being suspended, or being expelled. If you are unsure about what counts as academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism), ask. You are responsible for knowing the University of Manitoba regulations. Start by consulting the General Academic Regulations and Requirements, particularly Section 7 (Academic Integrity). See Section 7.1 (Plagiarism and Cheating):

<http://webapps.cc.umanitoba.ca/calendar03/regulations/plagiarism.asp>

Readings

Readings are available either electronically or in the course reader. Readings that are available electronically through JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org>), Oxford University Press (<http://www3.oup.co.uk>), or Kluwer (<http://www.kluweronline.com>) will require you to log on from a subscribing institution: if you're not on campus, using a University of Manitoba dial-up connection will suffice.

List of Readings

Modality

1. [Sider forthcoming: §§1-3.1](#) <http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/~sider>
2. Lewis 1973: 84-91 Course Reader
3. Lewis 1986: 1-20, 50-69 *On the Plurality of Worlds*
4. [Adams 1974: esp. 225-230](#) <http://www.jstor.org>
5. Plantinga 1976/2003: esp. 106-111 Course Reader
6. [Stalnaker 1976: esp. 66-70](#) <http://www.jstor.org>
7. Lewis 1986: 136-165, 174-191 *On the Plurality of Worlds*
8. van Inwagen 1986/2001: esp. 220-227 Course Reader
9. [Plantinga 1987: esp. 205-213](#) <http://www.jstor.org>
10. [Salmon 1988: esp. 239-241](#) <http://www.jstor.org>
11. [Sider forthcoming: esp. §§3.2-3.3, 3.5-3.6](#) <http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/~sider>

Persistence

1. Lewis 1983: 76-77 Course Reader
2. Lewis 1986: 202-204 *On the Plurality of Worlds*
3. [Haslanger 2003: §§1-2](#) <http://www.mit.edu/~shaslang/home.html>
4. [van Inwagen 1990](#) <http://www.jstor.org>
5. Sider 1996 Course Reader
6. Lewis 1988 Course Reader

7. Johnston 1987 Course Reader
8. Haslanger 1989 Course Reader
9. [Haslanger 2003: §§5, 8-9](#) <http://www.mit.edu/~shaslang/home.html>
10. [Lewis 2002](#) <http://www3.oup.co.uk>
12. [Wasserman 2003](#) <http://www3.oup.co.uk>
13. [Haslanger 2003: §6](#) <http://www.mit.edu/~shaslang/home.html>
14. Sider 2000b Course Reader

Material Constitution

1. [Lewis 1971](#) <http://www.jstor.org>
2. Lewis 1986: 248-263 *On the Plurality of Worlds*
3. [Johnston 1992](#) <http://www.jstor.org>
4. Thomson 1998 Course Reader
5. Baker 2000: 27-46 Course Reader
6. Wasserman forthcoming TBD
7. Burke 1992 Course Reader
8. [Wasserman 2002](#) <http://www.kluweronline.com/issn/0031-8116>
9. [Bennett forthcoming](#) <http://www.princeton.edu/~kbennett/>

Analytical List of Readings

1. Modality

As an introduction to our topic, see Sider forthcoming: §§1-2, 3.0.

1.1. Possibilism

Lewis (1973: 84-91, 1986: 1-5) argues that possible worlds are concrete universes just like ours. He then offers reductive accounts of modality (Lewis 1986: 5-20) and properties and propositions (Lewis 1986: 50-69).

1.2. Actualism

Actualists argue that possible worlds are abstract representations of the concrete universe: maximal consistent sets of propositions (Adams 1974: esp. 225-230), maximal possible states of affairs (Plantinga 1976/2003: esp. 106-111), or properties (Stalnaker 1976: esp. 66-70).

1.3. An account of modality?

Lewis (1986: 136-165, 174-191) argues that actualism does not offer a *reductive* account of modality. Actualists argue that possibilism does not offer a *correct* account of modality (van Inwagen 1986/2001: esp. 220-227, Plantinga 1987: esp. 205-213, Salmon 1988: esp. 239-241). For discussion, see Sider: §3 (skip §3.4).

Want more?

Take a look at the papers collected in Loux, ed. 1979 (these include Lewis 1973: 84-91, Adams 1974, Stalnaker 1976, and Plantinga 1976), van Inwagen 2001, or Plantinga 2003. Or take a look at Ted Sider's online bibliography (from 2000):

http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/~sider/teaching/modality_bib.htm

2. Persistence

2.1. Perdurantism

Objects persist when they exist at more than one time. According to *perdurantists*, objects persist by having different temporal parts that exist at different times (Lewis 1983: 76-77, 1986: 202-204; Haslanger 2003: §2).¹

¹ Lewis 1983: 76-77 is a postscript to Lewis 1976.

2.2. Endurantism

According to *endurantism*, objects persist by being wholly present at more than one time (van Inwagen 1990, Haslanger 2003: §2).

2.3. Exdurantism

According to *exdurantism*, objects persist by having temporal counterparts that exist at different times (Sider 1996, Haslanger 2003: §2).

2.4. The problem of temporary intrinsics

Lewis (1986: 202-204, 1988) uses the problem of temporary intrinsics as an argument for perdurantism. See Haslanger 2003: §1.

One way for endurantists to reply is to relativize something—properties, their instantiation, or the truth of propositions—to times (see Johnston 1987, Haslanger 1989, van Inwagen 1990, Haslanger 2003: §§5, 8-9). Lewis (2002) replies to the relativizers. Wasserman (2003) defends them.

One objection to perdurantism is that temporary intrinsics aren't, strictly speaking, properties of persisting objects (see Haslanger 1989, Haslanger 2003: §6). Exdurantism fares better in this respect (Sider 2000b).

Want more?

For more on exdurantism, see Hawley 2001, Sider 2001. For more on persistence, see Sider 2000a, the bibliography in Haslanger 2003, or Ted Sider's online bibliography:

http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/~sider/teaching/p&p_bibliography.htm

(Sider's online bibliography covers material on both persistence and material constitution.)

3. Material Constitution

3.1. One-Thingism

According to *one-thingism*, the relation between a statue and the bit of clay that it is made out of is *identity* (so there is only one thing there). See Lewis 1971, 1986: 248-263.

3.2. Multi-Thingism

According to *multi-thingism*, the relation between a statue and the bit of clay that it is made out of is *not* identity (so there is more than one thing there). See Johnston 1992, Thomson 1998.

3.3. What is constitution?

Thomson (1998) and Baker (2000) offer analyses of constitution. Wasserman (forthcoming) argues against them.

3.4. An objection to multi-thingism: how can the statue and the clay have different modal, temporal, and kind properties?

Burke (1992) argues that multi-thingists cannot explain how the statue and the piece of clay can differ in modal, temporal, and kind properties. Wasserman (2002) argues that multi-thingists can offer a mereological explanation. Bennett (forthcoming) argues that multi-thingists don't need to offer any explanation.

Want more?

See the papers in Rea, ed. 1997. Or take a look at Ted Sider's online bibliography:

http://fas-philosophy.rutgers.edu/~sider/teaching/p&p_bibliography.htm

(Sider's online bibliography covers material on both persistence and material constitution.)

Works Cited

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