

Philosophy 571: Modal Plenitude
Spring, 2019

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Course website: <http://blogs.umass.edu/bricker/teaching/modal-plenitude>

Office hours: Tuesday 3-4, and by appointment

Prerequisite: Open to all graduate students in philosophy, and others by permission. Some background in set theory and/or model theory would be useful for some of the readings, but is not required.

Course Requirements: Either three short papers (roughly 6-10 pages) or two short papers, one of which is extended to be a longer paper (roughly 12-20 pages). Each paper is worth one-third of the grade. If you choose to extend a short paper, one-third of the grade will be on the material in the extension. Also, everyone enrolled will do a short 15-20 minute presentation in the first half of the course. The presentation and your participation discussion may bump your grade up in borderline cases.

Distribution and Seminar Credit (for graduate students): This course satisfies the metaphysics distribution requirement and the seminar requirement.

Required Reading: All readings are either available on-line or will be made available on the course website, address above. (The readings are password protected; e-mail me if you have forgotten the password.) Although I have put a pdf of the entire book on-line, you may want to have a hard copy of David Lewis's *On the Plurality of Worlds*.

Brief Course Description: The question of modal plenitude is just the question, what is the range of the possible? How far, and in what ways, does what is possible extend what is actual? In a possible-worlds framework, this question becomes: what is the extent of "logical space", the space of possible worlds? I divide the question of modal plenitude into three subquestions. (1) What sorts of *structures* are possible? For example, is there a possible world whose spacetime has 17 dimensions? What sorts of *contents* are possible? For example, is there a possible world with "alien" fundamental properties, properties that are not instantiated at the actual world? And what limits if any are there on what *recombinations* are possible? For example, for any way of rearranging actual things (and properties?) in spacetime, is there a world that rearranges them in that way?

To ensure that we have a proper background for addressing these questions, I plan to spend much of the first half of the course covering a good portion of Lewis's *On the Plurality of Worlds*. This is the framework within which much of the material in the second half on modal plenitude will be presented. For the most part, I will be arguing for a Humean account of plenitude, and we will be reading a bunch of my unpublished work on this topic. But we will also look at non-Humean approaches, for example, by causal essentialists.

Very Tentative Schedule:

Week 1: Brief introduction.

Week 2: Modality, Closeness. *Plurality*: 1-32. "Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic" (at least section 1).

Week 3: Properties. *Plurality*: 50-69. "New Work for a Theory of Universal".

Week 4: Isolation, Concreteness. Plenitude, Actuality. *Plurality*: 69-100.

Week 5: Realism and Reduction. *Plurality*: Chapter 3, 136-164; 174-182.

Week 6: "Transworld Identity", Haecceitism., Quidditism *Plurality*: Chapter 4, 192-219. "Ramseyan Humility".

Week 7: "Principles of Plenitude" and Postscript. "What is the Principle of Recombination?" by Effird and Stoneham; "Lewis's Principle of Recombination" by Darby and Watson.

Week 8: "Plenitude of Structures" and Postscript.

Week 9: *Plurality*, 101-4; "An Argument Against David Lewis' Theory of Possible Worlds" by Forrest and Armstrong; "Recombination Unbound" by Nolan.

Week 10: My "All Worlds in One: Reassessing the Forrest-Armstrong Argument"; "How Many Angels Can Dance on the Point of a Needle?" by Hawthorne and Uzquiano.

Week 11: My "Realism Without Parochialism" and Postscript. And maybe something by Eklund.

Week 12: Modal plenitude for the causal essentialist. Maybe something by Hawthorne.

Week 13 (or maybe earlier if it fits better): Cameron Gibbs will lead the seminar and present from his dissertation