C.I. Lewis and W.V.O Quine

The course explores American philosophy via C.I. Lewis, a conceptual pragmatist, and his student, W.V.O Quine, an analytic pragmatist. Lewis was the most famous U.S. philosopher of his generation until his Kantian epistemology was dethroned by logical positivism. On the one hand, Quine helped German-Jewish positivists escape the Nazis and establish their doctrine in America, but on the other hand, he demolished both Lewis and the positivists with his devastating attack on the analytic-synthetic distinction. About 60% of the course will be devoted to Lewis (because he remains neglected) and the rest to Quine, who will be read as a pivotal figure.

Main texts: C.I. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order*, selections from *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (both On Reserve.).

W.V.O. Quine, selected essays from *From a Logical Point of View*. (on Reserve).

Supplementary texts: on BB.

Work: seminar-type discussion, reading, writing:

- 3 papers for 463-4-5 pp.
- 1 revised paper for 563, 10-15pp.

Grades: Letter grades and pass/fail: 463/563, 25% attendance and participation; 75% paper (2)

Note: email all papers to nzack@uoregon.edu

See also appendices A-D to this syllabus.

Class Schedule January 7-March 13, 2014

**Week 1**  Tu—Introduction: Overview of C.I. and W.V.O Quine—pp. 6-8, below.

Thurs. MWO, Introduction

**Week 2.** Tu- MWO, II, “The Given Element in Experience”

Thurs. MWO, III, “The Pure Concept”
**Week 3**  
Tu. MWO, IV, “Common Concepts and Our Common World.”  
Thurs. MWO, V. “The Knowledge of Objects.”

**Week 4**  
Tu. MWO, VI. “The Relativity of Knowledge and the Independence of the Real.”  
Thurs. MWO VIII (8). The Nature of the A Priori and the Pragmatic Element in Knowledge.

**Week 5**  
Tues. By 10 AM. Phil 463, Paper no. 1. Write a coherent essay explaining how C.I. Lewis creates a view of mind and the world using his notions of the a priori and the given. (Make sure that you have textual references for all of your claims and interpretations.)  
Tues. AKV. Introduction, “Knowledge, Action, and Evaluation.”  
Thurs. AKV, Chapter XII, “Knowing, Doing, and Valuing”

**Week 6**  
Tues. AKV, Chap XVI, “The Moral Sense and Contributory Values”  
Tues. Summary of AKV material and its relation to MVO material.

**Week 7**  
Tuesday. By 10 AM.  
PHIL 463. Paper #2. Write an essay explaining what Lewis’s ‘philosophy of life’ is’ and how it relates to his epistemology (MVO). Offer your own assessment in the last page.

**QUINE**

**Week 7** Tu. INTERVIEW BETWEEN W. V. QUINE AND YASUHIKO TOMIDA (BB)  
Th. From a Logical Point of View (FLPV), “On What There is.”

**Week 8** Tu. FLPV, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”

**Week 9, *PHIL 563* White an essay with this title:**

**First Draft due Tuesday:**

“The Linguistic Turn from C. I. Lewis to W.V.O Quine to ________. “ The blank may be filled in by any philosopher you choose, from any tradition, who came after Quine. You will need to read ahead in the Quine material in order to compose this draft, as well as find the third figure. The paper will be returned to
you with ‘track change’ requests for revision, to be included in the final paper and there will be a tentative grade on this draft, to be revised upward with the final version.

**Week9**

Tu. FLPV, “The Problem of Meaning in Linguistics.”

Th. “Identity, Ostension and Hypostasis.”

**Week10**

Tues. Peter Hylton, “W. V. O. Quine.” (Secondary source on Quine, handout, or Stanford Encyclopedia article by Hylton, 2010, on BB.

Th. Summary and discussion for final papers.

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**Tuesday, Week 11, due at 10 AM—email to nzack@uoregon.edu**

Paper no. 3 Phil 463. Explain how Quine’s views overturned several major themes in Lewis’s system.

Final Draft of Paper for 563.

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**APPENDIX, A-D**

**A. Disability**

Philosophy Department faculty and instructors do their best to comply with Disability Services policy and instructions, as follows. Please see no. 4 in particular.

At a minimum, Instructors have the responsibility to ensure Full access for students with disabilities by responding to a student's need or request for accommodations as outlined below.

1. **If a student presents you with a notification letter from DS:**
   - You have the responsibility to cooperate with DS in providing authorized accommodations in a reasonable and timely manner. The specific accommodation determines the amount of involvement required. Refer to the section below entitled “Examples of Shared Responsibility” for a description of your involvement in providing the most common accommodations.

2. **If a student does not present you with a notification letter from DS:**
   - If a student requests an accommodation without having presented you with the notification letter from DS, please refer the student to DS. If the student is already on file with DS, a request form just needs to be filled out. If the student is new to DS, the process to review documentation and meet with the student may take some time. If the disability is obvious and the accommodation appears appropriate, you may need to provide the accommodation while awaiting official notification. If you are unsure, please call DS for assistance.

3. **If a student discloses a disability to you:**
   - Ask to see the notification letter from DS. This letter describes the accommodations that the institution is legally mandated to provide. During an office hour or at another convenient time, discuss the letter and the accommodations with the student. Students MUST present a notification letter from DS to receive testing accommodations. If the
student does not have a letter, please refer the student to DS. Appropriate accommodations will be determined after reviewing documentation of the disability and the student will be issued the notification letter.

7. **If you have a question about the appropriateness of an accommodation:**

8. Questions about the appropriateness of certain accommodations should be directed to the Director of DS.

9. **If a disability is suspected:**

10. Share your concerns with the student regarding his or her performance. If the concern seems disability-related, ask if he or she has ever received assistance for a disability. If it seems appropriate, refer the student to DS for further discussion and guidance. It is the student's decision whether or not to self-identify to DS; however, to receive accommodations, disclosure to DS with proper documentation is required.

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**B. GRADES : U of O Philosophy Department Policy**

What kind of paper deserves an “A,” “B,” etc.? The following reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon.

- **A** = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
- **B** = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
- **C** = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
- **D** = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
- **F** = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Please note: what counts as “excellent” or “OK,” for example, depends in part upon the nature and level of the class in question.

**Discussion** forms an integral part of the course, and your performance will be graded on the basis of the quantity and quality of your participation. You should arrive prepared to discuss the material and course assignments.

**C. Academic Honesty**

The stiffest punishments possible will be sought for those who plagiarize, fabricate, or cheat. (The usual punishment is an “F” for the course.) The following offers examples of academic dishonesty.

**Plagiarism** Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. Expectations may vary slightly among disciplines. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts.

A student will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is an acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever:

1. one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product;
2. one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one's own words;
3. one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials—unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the staff of Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226). In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise (for example, written work, printing, computer program, art or design work, musical composition, and choreography) prepared totally or in part by another.
Plagiarism also includes submitting work in which portions were substantially produced by someone acting as a tutor or editor.

Fabrication

Fabrication is the intentional use of information that the author has invented when he or she states or implies otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive.

Examples include, but are not limited to:
1. citing information not taken from the source indicated;
2. listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise;
3. inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercises.

Cheating

Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise.

Examples include, but are not limited to:
1. copying from another student’s paper, computer program, project, product, or performance;
2. collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one's work in a test situation;
3. resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor;
4. writing a paper for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you.

D. HOW TO WRITE GOOD PHILOSOPHY PAPERS

Note: When you get your papers back, there will be comments on ‘track changes’—please make sure you turn it on. The letters in parentheses indicate what aspect of your writing might need improvement and you may see them the second or third time this aspect still needs work.

1. CLARITY (CL) Since this is a philosophy paper, make sure that you define your terms and give reasons for claims. All of your ideas should be explicitly stated and not left to the reader to infer. One difference between philosophy and literature is that philosophers spell everything out, while creative writers depend on the imagination of the reader.

2. PRECISION (P) Try not to make vague claims or general statements about the ideas in the readings. Be accurate in reporting the views of others and exact in stating your own.

3. ORGANIZATION (O) Organize the ideas in the paper into a few coherent paragraphs. Summarize the main claims of your paper in 2 or 3 sentences that you write after you write the paper, but put at the very beginning of the paper. This is an appropriate introductory paragraph for a philosophy paper, not a filler or a fluffy beginning.

3. WRITING MECHANICS (WR) The mechanics include spelling, punctuation, syntax and complete sentence structure. Make sure that you already have these down or consult a source if you don’t. Highly recommended is Strunk and White’s The Elements of Style. This is available on line at www.bartleby.com/141/

4. ANALYSIS (A) Analyze claims. This means breaking your ideas down into their simpler components, and defining them. Do not start with or rely on dictionary definitions, but use your own words and cite the dictionary only if necessary. Dictionary definitions report usage, whereas a philosophical definition may be critical of current usage or find it vague. Examine the logical consequences of your claims and the claims of others.
5. CITATION (C) Cite the required readings this way in your text: (author’s last name, page no.) As well, provide a list of citations at the end of the paper. It is important to do this to show you have done the required reading and are not just recycling notes from class or discussion group lectures. If you do use material from lecture, please make sure to cite that as well.

6. QUOTATIONS (Q) Quotations should be used to illustrate a claim that you are making about an author. They are not a substitute for explaining the author’s thought in your own words. A good strategy is to state the author’s ideas in your own words first and then “prove” your interpretation with a short quote.

7. DIRECT (D) Be direct. Make sure that you give a direct and focused answer to the question for the paper. This is the most important requirement for papers to reach the B and A range.

The Mystery of C. I. Lewis
Naomi Zack
University of Oregon

1. C. I. Lewis?: How I got involved, what the mystery is, and what his main ideas were.

I wrote my 1970 dissertation, *An Evaluation of the Epistemology of C. I. Lewis* at Columbia University, as a subject recommended by Sidney Morgenbesser. When I taught an author's course on C.I. Lewis at the University of Oregon in 2004, he was still obscure. The mystery is Why? when he was the most famous philosopher of his generation and twice chair of the Harvard Philosophy Department that professionalized academic philosophy. The best answer to this question would result from a re-evaluation of Lewis's key ideas, in light of our philosophical intuitions, today. An overview of those ideas includes Lewis's notion of the given and the a priori, his subjectivism, epistemology, realism, constructivism, and his value theory that included both meta-aesthetics and meta-ethics. The principle texts for such an overview are *Mind and the World Order*, and *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, Book III.

2. Where Language Meets the World: Lewis's strange realism and his importance after positivism.

What was real for Lewis was the brute-fact nature of the given, which, in MVO, he insisted was ineffable. This was a departure from the naive realism of Bertrand Russell, if not from common sense. Lewis's epistemology rested on a theory of sense meaning that blocked the possibility of an inter-subjective theory of verification because its core was first person apprehensions of the given. However, Lewis need not have accepted the skepticism about other minds which he did and his focus on the point at which language meets extra-linguistic reality remains an important contribution to philosophy. It may be possible to consider a notion of representation from cognitive science, to fully make sense of the connection Lewis emphasized.

3. Puzzles in Lewis’s Aesthetic Theory: The Getty Kouros vs "Brillo Pads" and "Peasant Shoes"

Lewis believed that positive and negative value is a pervasive mode of the given and that value judgments are based on immediate apprehensions, which alone are intrinsically valuable. By contrast, John Dewey’s concept of “an experience” as the foundation for cultivated aesthetics seems more convincing. Furthermore, Lewis seems to have restricted aesthetics to high art, such as the Greek Kouros acquired by the Getty Museum in 1993. As Arthur Danto and others have pointed out based on twentieth century art history, art today is not necessarily aesthetic and neither need it be beautiful. I suggest that Lewis would probably have rejected as art, both Andy Warhol’s
Brillo Pads" and Van Gogh's "Peasant Shoes." This renders parts of Lewis's aesthetic theory quaint. However, his focus on the immediate aesthetic experience of experts synergistically lines up with Malcolm Gladwell's recent analysis of "thin slicing" by experts, in the book, Blink.

4. Lewis's Idea of the Good Life: Was it only for him, given his own subjectivism and apparent racism and sexism?

Lewis did not like the positivist and emotivist view that moral judgments are only expressive and could not be true or false, and he sought to provide a strong counterbalance. However, his own subjectivist theory of value verification did not succeed in distinguishing his view from the one he opposed. But, also for Lewis, the ultimate test of whether an experience or object has moral worth is its contribution to the *summum bonum*, which he called "the good life." The good life would be both realized in lived experience, and perhaps also reflected upon at its conclusion. Saul Bellow provides an interesting example of the first in an interview with Philip Roth, and obituaries and memorials could attest to the second. (Indeed, I consider Lewis's *New York Times* obit in this regard.) However, there is a serious question of whether there can be an intersubjective notion of the good life given Lewis's subjectivism, if not solipsism, his lifelong belief in selective breeding which echoed early twentieth century notions of white racial supremacy, and the ways in which Mabel, his wife, felt pressured to sacrifice creative career ambitions of her own, as soon as Lewis began graduate school. Nonetheless, some notion of a good life, taken as a whole, but with more objective and egalitarian support still merits discussion.

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Quine

W. V. O. (Willard Van Orman) Quine (1908-2000) was born in Akron, Ohio. He studied at Oberlin College and then Harvard. He earned his PhD in 1932 and then became a Harvard Fellow. This allowed four years for research and travel before beginning his fifty-year Harvard teaching career in 1936. Quine represents the apogee of twentieth century scientific philosophy, in many ways combining the best of logical positivism, pragmatism, and scientific empiricism. His influence is considered monumental and he has been highly regarded, even revered, as a person.¹ Quine’s main books are: *Word and Object* (1964), *The Ways of Paradox, and Other Essays* (1976), *Ontological Relativity* (1977), *From ¹As a philosopher, Quine has been criticized for his “ivory tower” view of the field and claiming that philosophers are not particularly qualified for “helping to get society on an even keel.” However, in real life, Quine was very involved in the upheavals and dangers of Nazism. After he visited Germany as a Harvard fellow in the 1930s and met the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle, he reacted against the Nazi’s incursions into philosophy (one of which was an avowedly racist mathematical journal, *Deutsche Mathematik*) by volunteering for the US Navy. After he returned to teaching at Harvard, he organized symposia and talks for members of the Vienna Circle (1938-41), particularly Carnap, although Carnap was later hired by the University of Chicago. Quine assisted Tarski in becoming employed by City College in New York.

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Quine did not think that the analytic-synthetic distinction could be defended, he had a holistic view of knowledge, likening the whole of all of our theories to a “web,” he believed that assertions of existence were relative to specific theories, and he thought that philosophical epistemology should be “naturalized.”

In “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (1951), Quine began with the accepted view that analytic statements are true in virtue of the meaning of their terms and not about the world, whereas synthetic statements are factual claims about the world. He then showed how it is impossible to define analyticity without a prior notion of sameness of meaning that itself presupposes analyticity. If we do not know what analyticity is, there is a strong implication that for all practical purposes, all of our beliefs are in some sense synthetic and subject to revision based on experience. The second dogma of empiricism that Quine attacked in the same article was the prevailing view that statements in a theory all face reality one by one. Quine claimed that all of the statements face reality together.

Quine is famous for claiming, “To be is to be the value of a variable.” He meant by this that we should be committed to the existence of only those entities that need to be posited in order to understand and apply scientific theories. He wrote:

“For my part I do, qua lay physicist, believe in physical objects and not in Homer's gods; and I consider it a scientific error to believe otherwise. But in point of epistemological footing, the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conceptions only as cultural posits.”

Quine’s holistic view of knowledge was his positive account of knowledge that resulted from his attack on the “second dogma of empiricism.” Quine thought that all of our scientific and lay theories were interconnected with the most general and abstract truths, for example, the truths of arithmetic are in the center of a “web.” Toward the periphery of this web were more specific generalizations and factual claims that were easier to give up in the face of experience that contradicted them. It is this aspect of Quine’s thought which places him in the tradition of pragmatism; it was accompanied by his naturalization of epistemology.

Quine’s naturalization of epistemology was based on his belief that knowledge could not have a foundation apart from science and that instead of philosophical epistemology there should be a scientific explanation of how we construct our web of knowledge and why and how that web is successful. Quine also had a flexible view of knowledge and thought that theoretical terms did not have definite or fixed meanings, that translation was “indeterminate,” and that it was unclear how words referred to objects.

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