

## Classical Readings in Theoretical Philosophy

# Donald Davidson

Thomas Müller

Classical Readings TF

Time: Wednesday, 15:15–17:00  
 Place: Bestuursgebouw 267  
 Meetings: 13 Feb 2008 – 18 June 2008, every other week  
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In this course we'll be reading articles by Donald Davidson from the collected volume *The Essential Davidson* (with an introduction by E. LePore and K. Ludwig), Oxford UP 2006; ISBN 0-19-928886-0 (paperback; 27,50 EUR).

We are rather free with respect to the outline of the course. The main aim is to get a thorough grasp on the basics of Davidson's philosophical program. Despite his essays spanning a large variety of subjects, an underling unity can be discerned. My idea is to devote one block each to issues of philosophy of action and psychology and to truth, meaning and interpretation (the two sections of the collection we'll be using). Within this general outline, the selection of papers is to some extent a matter of taste, and suggestions from the students' side is much encouraged.

## Course layout

### Periode 3: Philosophy of action and psychology

**13 Feb:** First session: Introduction, distribution of topics for class presentations. Reading: The logical form of action sentences (37–50)

**27 Feb, 13.00–14.45, BG 267:** The individuation of events (90–104) [**Jesse Mulder**]

**12 March:** Actions, reasons, and causes (23–36) [**Rudmer Bijlsma**]

**26 March:** Mental events (105–118) [**Bas Kops**]

**9 April:** How is weakness of the will possible? (72–89) [**James Bachmann, Nina van Heeswijk**]

### Periode 4: Truth, meaning and interpretation

**23 April:** Truth and meaning (155–170) [**Alessia Tosi**]

**7 May:** On saying that (171–183) [**Harmen Ghijsen, Niels van Miltenburg**]

**21 May:** On the very idea of a conceptual scheme (196–208) [**Wouter Kusters**]

**4 June:** A coherence theory of truth and knowledge + Afterthoughts (225–241) [**Gerhard Bos**]

**11 June:** \*\*\* **Date changed** \*\*\* Joint discussion of research problems

## Course requirements

### Active participation and interaction with others

You are expected to attend all seminar sessions and prepare for them carefully. You are also expected to interact with your fellow students by commenting on their work and continuing discussion with them after class.

### Final grade

Active participation is a precondition for obtaining a grade. The grade itself is determined via two components:

**Class presentation (20%):** Each student will present one of the assigned texts in class (10–15min). The idea behind this is not a comprehensive survey of the text, but a structured exposition that helps to initiate discussion. A handout summarizing the main point is part of the presentation. Please upload your handout to the BSCW system (at <https://bscw.phil.uu.nl>), using a non-proprietary file format (e.g., PDF). Since we have more participants than slots, joint presentations are ok. In this case, please start coordinating your joint presentation early, and provide a handout each.

Discussion will proceed on the assumption that *everybody* has read the respective text carefully.

**Final paper (80%):** Each student will write a 2500 word paper (in English) on a subject related to the themes discussed in the course. The topic of the paper, in the form of a written research problem (one page giving your name and e-mail address, a title, a clearly stated question, an outline and some literature), has to be handed in and distributed among the course participants four weeks prior to the paper deadline. Please use the BSCW system (at <https://bscw.phil.uu.nl>) to upload your text, and use a non-proprietary file format (e.g., PDF). We will use the last session to discuss these problems together and give feedback. **Deadline for the research problem is 11 June 2008, for the final paper, 9 July 2008.** The paper needs to have (i) a cover sheet indicating the title, your name and e-mail address, the course number and the date; (ii) an introduction stating the research problem and the goal of the paper; (iii) a main part; (iv) a conclusion and (v) a list of references consistently formatted in some standard style. — Deadlines are strict.

In the assessment of the paper, emphasis will be placed on the research problem and goal, on argumentative coherence and fairness, understanding of the relevant issues, originality, form, and clarity of writing.