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Spring 2013  
T, TH: 10-11:30 AM  
Rudolph Hall 282  
Hist. Dept: Busch 113  
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DESCRIPTION

This course examines the history of American pragmatism through three of its primary founders, the philosophers Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. It considers pragmatism as a response to the experience of uncertainty brought on by modernity, contextualizing it amidst five kinds of nineteenth-century thought: philosophical (neo-Kantianism and anti-foundationalism), scientific (experimental methodology and evolutionary theory), mathematical (statistical laws and the probability revolution), religious (biblical criticism and Transcendentalism), and social and political (progressivism and industrialism). It focuses on the origins, manifestations, and development of pragmatism through an analysis of each thinker’s characterization of inquiry, belief and truth, giving special attention to theories of meaning (Peirce), consciousness (James), and self and community (Dewey). Some attention will be also paid to the pragmatists’ views on religion, ethics, education, and aesthetics. Students will read major essays by each philosopher as well as two historical, interpretive works.

GOALS

- Understand the key role that pragmatism played in nineteenth and twentieth century American thought
- Master an advanced body of historical and philosophical knowledge
- Advance one’s critical and analytical writing skills

TEXTS


All the books are available at the campus bookstore. Except for the Haack anthology, which can be ordered through Mobius, they are also kept on 2 hour reserve at the reserve desk in Olin Library. Selected essays will also be assigned through Blackboard (see Course Schedule below).
ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Your grade for this course will be based on class attendance/participation and discussion questions (25 points), and three take-home essays (25 points each). Your final grade will be calculated on a 100 point scale: 98-100 = A+, 93-97 = A, 90-92 = A−; 88-89 = B+, 83-87 = B, 80-82 = B; 78-79 = C+, 73-77 = C, 70-72 = C−; 68-69 = D+, 63-67 = D, 60-62 = D; 59↓ = F.

Participation and Readings: This is an intensive discussion-based course. You are expected to be an active participant in the learning process. This means it is essential that you complete all of the reading assignments in a timely manner and come to class regularly and be prepared to engage others in a lively discussion. More than two absences from class and/or abstaining from participation will adversely impact your final grade.

Discussion Questions/Leading Discussions: To foster discussion, each student will be required to post discussion questions about the readings to Blackboard (use the Discussion tab) three-to-four times depending on final enrollments. A sign-up sheet will be passed around in class. We will decide as a class the most convenient time to post questions in order to give students a fair chance to think about them in the appropriate fashion. Students will lead class discussion that day based on these questions.

Essays: Three essays of approximately six to eight pages each are required for this course. You will have a choice of questions for each essay that will be based on the assigned reading for those sections of the course. You will not be required to do outside reading or research. The essay questions will be made available on Blackboard (see “Assignments”) with sufficient time to complete them by the due dates.

Note: There is no final exam for this course.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

In addition to writing two of the three undergraduate essays, graduate students will be required to write a term paper (either an original research paper of 20-25 pages for Ph.D. candidates or an historiographical one of 10-15 pages for MA candidates), and get approval of the topic in consultation with the instructor by the fourth week of the term.

LATE POLICIES

All written work must be turned in on time. Please note that late papers will be reduced by one-third grade point for each day they are late! Thus, a paper that earned an A− but was turned in one day late would automatically drop to a B+. All written work must also conform to the standards of college essay writing (see the Guidelines for College Essay Writing on Blackboard). Extensions will be granted only for religious holidays, official Wash U sports, and for extreme medical emergencies (documented) such as grave illness or a death in the family. Please bring such cases to my attention immediately rather than waiting until the last minute.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & PLAGIARISM

To plagiarize is defined as “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own” (Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 898). This includes but is not limited to submitting someone else’s work (in whole, part or paraphrase) as one’s own without fully and properly crediting the author (intentionally or otherwise); submitting as one’s original work materials obtained from an individual or agency; and/or submitting as one’s own original work material that has been produced through unacknowledged collaboration with others. “Cyber cheating” is also a form of plagiarism. It includes cutting and pasting someone else’s web work and submitting it as your own; downloading essays, papers, speeches etc. from the web and turning them in as your own; and buying essays, papers, speeches etc. from the web and turning them in as your own (http://www.lib.umb.edu/webtutorial/module6/Module6-1.html).

Plagiarism is absolutely forbidden. It is the worst form of academic cheating. Its violation is taken very seriously. Plagiarizers will be punished accordingly. Punishment ranges from automatic failure of the assignment and failing the course to various levels of official university sanctions, including suspension and even expulsion. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE! Students should review the Academic Integrity Policy that they signed upon entering the University, and recall that Washington University has a “three-strikes-and-you’re-out” policy. For more on plagiarism and academic integrity see: https://acadinfo.wustl.edu/WUCRSLFrontMatter/WebWUCRSLInfo_AcadIntegrity.htm

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students who need disability-related accommodations (learning and physical) are encouraged to meet and work with Libby Lessentine, the Disability Resources Coordinator (ext. 5-4062, elessentine@wustl.edu). Her office is located in the Center of Advanced Learning in Cornerstone in the South 40. I will do everything I can to accommodate your needs as well.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours are for you. You are strongly encouraged to come to them to discuss the course material and when you have questions. A good deal of learning and confidence building occurs during one-on-one conversation with the professor. If you cannot make the designated office hours, contact me to schedule an appointment.

BLACKBOARD

Blackboard is the web-based course management system at Washington University. You can reach Blackboard at https://bb.wustl.edu or through WebSTAC at https://acadinfo.wustl.edu. You will need your WUSLT KEY to access it. Once you are logged on, find HIST 4564. Click on it and go to the various options. The Blackboard page for this course is meant to be used exclusively by its members. You should check it regularly. All up-to-date information will be posted there including the syllabus, course schedule, writing assignments, readings, course resources, and other useful links. You should use Blackboard to post your discussion questions via the “Discussion” tab (click on a new thread under “Pragmatism”).
COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

KEY

MC = The Metaphysical Club
HPA = A History of Philosophy in America
PSW = Pragmatism... Selected Writings

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

Jan. 15:  Course Overview, Syllabus, Schedule
Jan. 17:  Overview of Pragmatism in Historical Context

MC, Preface, Part One
HPA, 95-96 & Chaps 6 & 7
PSW, Preface & 15-40

WEEK 2: THE METAPHYSICAL CLUB

Jan. 22 & 24: The Chauncey Wright and the Impact of Darwinism

MC, Chap 9
HPA, 129-133
PSW, “Historical Affinities and Genesis,” (1907), 158-160
BB, Chauncey Wright, “The Winds and the Weather” (1858)

WEEKS 3-5: CHARLES PEIRCE

Jan. 29:  Biography, Career, Contexts

MC, Chaps 7 & 8
HPA, 133-134 (top)

Jan. 31:  Signs and Epistemology

HPA, 134-140
PSW, “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” (1868), 69-105

Feb. 5:  Signs and Metaphysics

HPA, 134-140 (again)
PSW, “The Backward State of Metaphysics” (1898), 169-176, and “The Categories” (1903), 177-208
Feb. 7:  Inquiry and the Scientific Method

HPA, 141-142 (top)
PSW, “The Fixation of Belief” (1877), 107-126

Feb. 12:  The Pragmatic Maxim of Meaning

HPA, 142-144
PSW, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (1878), 127-150, and “Pragmatism” (1902), 152-155

Feb. 14:  Assessing Peirce’s “Pragmatism”

HPA, 144-149
PSW, “The Architectonic Construction of Pragmatism” (1905), 155-158, and “What Pragmatism Is” (1905), 161-167

Essay One posted to Blackboard

WEEKS 6-10: WILLIAM JAMES

Feb. 19:  Biography, Career, Contexts

MC, Part Two
HPA, 150-151 (middle)

Feb. 21:  Psychology and Consciousness

HPA, 151-156 (top)
BB, William James, “The Stream of Thought,” Principles of Psychology (1890)

Feb. 26:  Religious and Moral Philosophy

HPA, 163-171
PSW, “The Will to Believe” (1896), 221-246, and “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” (1891), 247-272

Essay One Due (hardcopy, in-class)

Feb. 28:  Empiricism, Rationalism, and the Tertium Quid

HPA, 156-161
PSW, “The Present Dilemma in Philosophy” (1906), 273-287
Mar. 5: On the Origins and Nature of Pragmatism

HPA, 156-161 (again)
PSW, “What Pragmatism Means” (1906), 289-308

Mar. 7: Epistemology and Truth

HPA, 161-163
PSW, “Pragmatism’s Conception of Truth” (1906)

Mar. 12 & 14: Spring Break – No Classes

Mar. 19: Metaphysics and Pure Experience

HPA, 171-176
BB, William James, “Does Consciousness Exist?” (1904) and “A World of Pure Experience” (1905), Essays in Radical Empiricism (1912)

Mar. 21: Assessing James’s Pragmatism

HPA, 177-78

Essay Two posted to Blackboard

WEEKS 11-14: JOHN DEWEY

Mar. 26: Biography, Career, and Contexts

MC, Part Four

Mar. 28: Society and Education

HPA, 179-181
PSW, “School Conditions and the Training of Thought” (1910), 331-340

Apr. 2: Inquiry and Truth

HPA, 182-185
PSW, “Truth and Consequences” (1911), 341-361, and “Common Sense and Scientific Inquiry” (1938), 443-463

Essay Two Due (hardcopy, in-class)
Apr. 4: Politics and Democracy

HPA, 188-190
PSW, “Philosophy and Democracy” (1919), 363-378

Apr. 9: Facts and Values

HPA, 185-188
PSW, “The Construction of the Good” (1929), 395-422

Apr. 11: Praxis and Certainty

HPA, 190-191 (top)
PSW, “The Quest for Certainty” (1929), 379-394

Apr. 16: Aesthetics and Religion

HPA, 191-196
PSW, “Art as Experience” (1934), 423-441

Apr. 18: Assessing Dewey’s Pragmatism

HPA, 196-197

*Essay Thee posted to Blackboard*

WEEK 15: CONCLUSION

Apr. 23 & 25: Assessing the Main Themes of Pragmatism

MC, Part Five & Epilogue
BB, Arthur Lovejoy, “The Thirteen Pragmatisms” (1908)

May 7: Essay Three Due (hardcopy, in my mailbox, Busch 116, by 4:30 pm)
Grad. Stud. Papers Due (hardcopy, in my mailbox, Busch 116, by 4:30 pm)

COURSE EVALUATION

Students will be given the opportunity at the end of this course to evaluate it and the professor. The College of Arts and Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis strongly recommends that you fill out and submit course evaluations, and your professor finds them useful for improving his performance and future versions of this course. To fill one out, go to http://evals.wustl.edu.