

AN INTRODUCTION TO PRAGMATIST THOUGHT

Description and Objectives

This introductory course offers a wide-ranging exploration of pragmatism, understood not only as a philosophical tradition, but as a very particular way of thinking. Throughout the course of semester, we will focus on three interrelated areas of conversation that have been and continue to be central to pragmatism.

- *Metaphilosophy*: This thematic block will revolve around two questions: What is pragmatism? and, how do pragmatists conceive of philosophy?
- *Metaphysical & epistemological problems*: In this section we will explore the singular approach of pragmatist thinkers to the notions of experience and truth.
- *Moral & social philosophy*: In this thematic block we will focus on the pragmatists' stance to the question of moral justification and we will explore the contribution of several pragmatic thinkers to a series of social and political problems.

This course is designed in pragmatic spirit. First, the kind of exploration I propose does not have a philosophical tradition as its center, but a series of concrete problems or questions; second, the selection of authors is deliberately pluralistic, including philosophers from underrepresented groups, different generations, and with contrasting temperaments and views; third, all participants in the course are expected to act not as mere passive spectators but as active agents in what must be understood as a collective process of inquiry; finally, the goal of the course is not simply to cover certain textual material, but to engage in a critical reflection on questions that have a significant importance to human life.

Required Texts:

Dewey, John. *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. New York: Dover Publications, 2004.
ISBN: 978-0486434384

Stuhr, John J. *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy: Essential Readings and Interpretive Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN: 978-0195118308

[Other readings will be made available online through Canvas.]

Recommended Secondary Literature

Bacon, Michael. *Pragmatism: An Introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012.

Bernstein, Richard J. *The Pragmatic Turn*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010.

Menand, Louis. *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

Misak, Cheryl. *The American Pragmatists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Assignments and Grading

- Attendance & Participation: 10%
- Short Papers: 30%
- Thematic Papers: 60%

Attendance & Participation: Each student must prepare for, attend, and participate in all class sessions. Preparation requires attentive reading of the assigned material. Attendance at all class meetings is required unless absence is justified. Participation includes active listening and contribution to classroom conversation in a way that demonstrates respect for all class members.

Short papers (8 papers): In preparation for 8 class meetings, every student must write a 1-page paper (between 300 and 350 words) on the reading assigned for that day. Each paper must include an account of the author's main/s thesis/es and the reconstruction of the argument in its/their support.

The main purpose of these papers is to help students prepare class sessions, raise the quality of class discussion, and allow the instructor to closely follow and support the progression of each student.

These papers must be submitted electronically before the class for which they are written (no late papers will be accepted) and will be returned by email with comments and a grade.

Thematic papers (3 papers): At the end of each thematic block (see schedule below), each student must submit a 7-pages paper based on the material covered during the previous weeks. Papers must contain a clear thesis statement and offer a properly developed argument in its support.

Each of these papers must be submitted by email as a Word or PDF attachment no later than midnight the day are due. They must include a title, the student's name, course number, and instructor's name. Please use a standard 12-points serif font, standard margins, and double space between lines. No late papers will be accepted unless the student has made a previous arrangement with the instructor.

Course Policies and Important Information for Students

The Honor Code: The Honor Code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher's instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council:

<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>

Citation and plagiarism: All texts submitted must be the student's own original work. The student must make sure that all quotations and paraphrased ideas are fully and accurately cited. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Honor Council without exception. For proper citation procedures visit: http://guides.main.library.emory.edu/citing_your_sources

Academic support and resources: There is a variety of resources available to students. To learn more, visit the following websites and/or consult the instructor:

- Access and Disability Resources:

If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, please contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) and/or consult the instructor.

<http://college.emory.edu/oue/student-support/students-with-disabilities/index.html>

- Counseling and Psychological Services:

Emory University's Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) provides free, confidential services for students including: initial assessments, crisis intervention, community referrals, brief individual, couples, and group counseling; consultation; community outreach services; and educational workshops.

<http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/index.html>

- English as a Second Language (ESL Program):

The ESL Program supports Emory College students who speak English as a second language both directly (through tutoring as well as through academic support resources for non-native speakers) and indirectly (through the collaborative partnerships that the Program has established with other programs throughout the College). *<http://college.emory.edu/oue/student-support/esl-program/index.html>*

- General Support for Students:

The Office for Undergraduate Education offers programs to support student learning. These include mentoring, coaching, and tutoring services for individuals and small groups. *<http://college.emory.edu/oue/student-support/index.html>*

- Writing Support and Peer Tutoring (Emory Writing Center):

Tutors in the Emory Writing Center Program are available to support Emory College students as they work on any type of writing assignment, at any stage of the composing process. Tutors can assist with a range of projects, from traditional papers and presentations to websites and other multimedia projects. Students who are non-native speakers of English are welcome to visit either the Writing Center tutors or the ESL tutors. All other students in the college should see Writing Center tutors.

<http://writingcenter.emory.edu>

Thematic Block	Reading	Notes
Metaphilosophy	Charles Sanders Peirce: "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (1878)	
	William James: "The Types of Philosophic Thinking" (1909)	
	William James: "What Pragmatism Means" (1907)	
	John Dewey: <i>Reconstruction in Philosophy</i> (1920)	
	Richard Rorty: "Professionalized Philosophy" (1976)	
	Richard Rorty: "Method, Social Science, and Social Hope" (1981)	Thematic paper #1
Metaphysical & Epistemological Problems	Charles Sanders Peirce: "The Fixation of Belief" (1877)	
	Williams James: "The Will to Believe" (1897)	
	John Dewey: <i>Experience and Nature</i> [excerpts] (1925)	
	John Dewey: "Qualitative Thought" (1930)	
	Hilary Putnam: "Realism with a Human Face" (1987)	
	Hilary Putnam: "Beyond the Fact / Value Dichotomy" (1987)	Thematic paper #2
Moral & Social Philosophy	William James: "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" (1891)	
	Jane Addams: "Charitable Effort" (1902)	
	Alain Locke: "Values and Imperatives" (1935)	
	John Dewey: <i>Theory of Valuation</i> [excerpts] (1939)	
	George Herbert Mead: "The Philosophical Basis of Ethics"	
	Philip Kitcher: <i>The Ethical Project</i> [excerpts] (2011)	Thematic paper #3