

Pragmatism

Philosophy 556

Spring 2018

Th 2:45–5:35

BB 002

Pragmatists challenge the neat division between the theoretical and the practical. Belief involves a commitment to act in a certain way and so too, they argue, does knowledge. Belief involves commitment to act, so the theoretical and the practical cannot be kept apart. This course will address pragmatism from its origin in the 19th-century through to the present day. We will read works by Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, Jane Addams, Alain Locke, and others.

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Office hours: Tu Th noon–1:00 and by appointment

Texts: Course readings will be available via Blackboard.

Requirements and grading: Students should come to class prepared to discuss assigned material. Students who miss class are required to write a 1–2 page paper on one of the session's assigned readings.

Students are required to make three presentations: (a) a brief biographical summary of a philosopher we are reading in the course, (b) a presentation on the content of one of the course readings, and (c) a presentation on their final paper.

The presentation of a readingshould offer a summary of the central claim and argument of a reading and offer some points which open class discussion. It should not be an outline of the reading! It may evaluate how successful the article is or connect issues raised by the article to earlier readings in the course.

Students will write a final (10–15 page) paper.

33% Participation

33% Class presentations

33% Final paper

Schedule of topics

This is a (very!) tentative schedule. Specific readings may take more or less time than indicated, we may drop or add some readings as we go.

Week 1 jan 25

Introduction

Week 2 feb 1

Transcendentalists

Ralph Waldo Emerson: 'Self reliance', 'The oversoul'

Stanley Cavell: 'What's the use of calling Emerson a pragmatist?'

Theodore Parker: 'Transcendentalism'

Week 3 feb 8

Charles Sanders Peirce: Selections from 'Some Consequences...', 'The Fixation of Belief', 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear'

Week 4 feb 15

William James: 'The will to believe', 'Philosophical conceptions and practical results'

Week 5 feb 22

James: chapters 1–2 of *Pragmatism*

'Pragmatism' from the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*

Week 6 mar 1

A.O. Lovejoy: 'The Thirteen Pragmatisms'

John Dewey: 'What pragmatism means by the practical', 'An added note as to the "practical" '

C.I. Lewis: 'Pragmatism and current thought'

Week 7 mar 8

John Dewey: 'Philosophy's search for the immutable', 'Context and thought'

Spring Break!

Week 8 mar 22

Jane Addams: selections from *Democracy and Social Ethics*

Week 9 mar 29

Alain Locke: 'Values and imperatives', 'Pluralism and intellectual democracy', 'Cultural relativism and ideological peace', 'A functional view of value ultimates'

Week 10 apr 5

Richard Rorty: 'Pragmatism as anti-authoritarianism'

Hilary Putnam: 'Intelligence and ethics'

Ruth Anna Putnam: 'Democracy and value inquiry'

Week 11 apr 12

C.I. Lewis: 'The pragmatic element in knowledge'

Alexander Klein: 'In defense of wishful thinking'

Alan Richardson: 'Engineering philosophy of science'

[background — W.V.O Quine: 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism']

Week 12 apr 19

Nelson Goodman: 'The New Riddle of Induction', 'Words, Works, Worlds'

Week 13 apr 26

Isaac Levi: 'Inquiry, deliberation, and method'

Cheryl Misak: 'Scientific realism, anti-realism, and empiricism'

Sharyn Clough: 'Feminist science studies from a pragmatist perspective'

Week 14 may 3

Conclusion

Paper presentations