

PRAGMATISM

Spring 2016, PHIL 360

Office Hours: Tu, Th: 2-4, and by appointment

Office: Wheatley 5-008

Professor Steven Levine

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Course Description

In this class we will mainly examine the three central figures of the pragmatic tradition: Charles S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. While Pragmatism is the most important philosophical movement produced by the United States, it also has a global philosophical significance owing to the fact that it was the first movement to decisively break with certain key assumptions governing Modern philosophy. Specifically, it broke with the rationalist notions that cognition could be examined in abstraction from action, and that truth could be defined independently of human inquiry. The goal of this course is to understand how Pragmatism challenges these assumptions while also providing us with a new picture of knowledge, truth, inquiry, communication, value, democracy, and freedom. In the last few weeks of the class we will look at some contemporary work on pragmatism, democracy, and value.

Required Texts

William James, *Pragmatism and Other Writings*, Penguin Press (P)

John Dewey, *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, University of Chicago Press (PJD)

All other readings can be accessed at my website <http://faculty.www.umb.edu/steven.levine/>

Course Outline (This is subject to revision)

Week	Date	Class Theme and Activities	Assignment
Week 1	Jan. 26-28	Review of Syllabus Introduction to Pragmatism	Excerpt from 'Some Consequences of the Four Incapacities', <i>download at my website</i>
Week 2	Feb. 2-4	Peirce: Inquiry	'The Fixation of Belief', <i>download at my website</i>
Week 3	Feb. 9-11	Peirce: Meaning and Truth	'How to Make our Ideas Clear', <i>download at my website</i>
Week 4	Feb. 16-18	James: Pragmatism	'The Present Dilemma in Philosophy' (P) 'What Pragmatism Means' (P)
Week 5	Feb. 23-25	James: Truth	'Pragmatism and Common Sense' (P) 'Pragmatism's Conception of Truth' (P)
Week 6	March. 1-3	James: Humanism and Truth	'Pragmatism and Humanism' (P) 'Humanism and Truth' (P)

Week 7	Mar. 8-10	James: Morality and Value First Paper Due <u>March 10th</u>	'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life' (P) 'On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings' (P)
	Mar. 12-20	SPRING BREAK	
Week 8	Mar. 22-24	Dewey: Knowledge and Action	'Philosophy's Search for the Immutable' (PJD) 'The Practical Character of Reality' (PDJ)
Week 9	March 29 (No Class on the 31 st)	Dewey: Inquiry	'The Pattern of Inquiry' (PDJ)
Week 10	April 5-7	Dewey: Ethics	'The Construction of Good' (PJD) 'Morality is Social' (PDJ)
Week 11	April 12-14	Dewey: Democracy	'Search for the Great Community' (PJD) E. Anderson, 'Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value', <i>download at my website</i>
Week 12	April 19-21	Applying Deweyian Democracy: Segregation	E Anderson, 'Democratic Ideals and Segregation', <i>download at my website</i>
Week 13	April 26-28	A Peircean Critique of Deweyian Democracy	R. Talisse, Chapter 2 and 3 from <i>A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy</i> , <i>download at my website</i> Recommended: C. Misak, 'Making Disagreement Matter: Pragmatism and Deliberative Democracy', <i>download at my website</i>
Week 14	May 3-5	Pragmatism, Pluralism, and Democracy	R. Talisse, Chapter 4 from <i>A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy</i> , <i>download at my website</i> M. Bacon, 'The Politics of Truth: A Critique of Peirce and Deliberative Democracy', <i>download at my website</i>
Week 15	May 10	OPEN CLASS Term Paper Due <u>May 18th</u>	

Assessable Tasks

In this class you will have a variety of ways of demonstrating your intellectual engagement with the course material, including a 6-page paper and a 10-12 page term paper. In the first paper you will not make an argument, but analyze in as clear a way as possible an issue or argument from the readings from the first half of the class. For the term paper, you will formulate a thesis involving the readings from the second half of the class and argue for it. This paper must involve the use of several second-

ary sources. We shall discuss this in detail later in the semester. As this is a small class, it will be run in a seminar style, requiring more participation and in-class effort from you. This is why the participation grade is worth 15 percent.

Final Grade Calculation

First Paper: 35%, due **March 10th**

Term Paper: 50%, due **May 18th**

Class participation: 15%

Attendance Policy

Your presence in class is a minimum condition of your success in this course. Attendance as well as lateness will be noted and factored into your final grade, as follows:

- 4 absences: final grade lowered by ½ grade (e.g. from B- to C+)
- 5 absences: final grade lowered by a full grade (e.g. from B- to C-)
- 6 absences: failure; no credit given

In general, the distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences is not recognized (an absence is an absence). Repeated lateness in arriving to class will count as an absence.

Other Important Information

1. Unless otherwise noted readings, handouts, assignments, and other announcements will be posted on my website which can be reached by clicking the link on my faculty page located on the UMB philosophy department website or at this address:
<http://faculty.www.umb.edu/steven.levine/>
2. You need to have a working UMB email so that I can contact you through the wiser system.
3. The readings for this class are listed above by the week. If homework is not explicitly assigned in class, these readings are your homework. The reading schedule may change due to events. If it does I will update the schedule on my website.
4. I only give incompletes if there is a really good reason like family emergency.
5. A paper will be penalized a whole grade if it is up to one week late. Thereafter, it will be penalized a whole grade each additional week that it is late. ***I do not accept emailed papers unless I explicitly agree to it.***

Policy on Academic Honesty

Plagiarism involves presenting someone else’s work as your own. This means that if you ever use a phrase, a sentence, or an idea from a text, you must provide a citation. If it is something we read for the class, it is acceptable to give the source and page number. E.g.: (Rawls, “The Justification of Civil Disobedience, p. 100). When utilizing other material, you must provide full bibliographic information of that text. If you don’t provide appropriate citations, this will affect your grade. If you have gone so far as to misrepresent another person’s work as your own by copying from another’s paper, using a paper writing service, copying something off the web or out of a book or in any other way I will assume you intend to commit plagiarism and will give you an ‘F.’ The current Code of Student Conduct which includes information about academic dishonesty is available online at:

<http://www.umb.edu/academics/undergraduate/office/students/CodeofStudentConduct.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please contact the Ross Center for Disability Services. The Ross Center for Disability Services is located in the Campus Center, UL 211. You can contact them by calling: 617-287-7430 or sending an email to: ross.center@umb.edu.