

Philosophy 455: Recent Philosophy
American Pragmatism: Philosophy and Science

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Fall 2011

Tu/Th 1:00-2:15pm, Helen C. White Hall 4275

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Description

The American pragmatist philosophers shaped many of the ideas and institutions that define American cultural life. As philosophers, they did extraordinary work in logic, ethics, epistemology, and the philosophy of science; but they also published influential psychology textbooks (William James), inspired progressive educators (John Dewey), and designed one of the first randomized controlled experiments (C.S. Peirce). This course is an introduction to the central ideas of American pragmatism. In the first part of the course, we will examine the roots of pragmatism: Peirce's account of the logic of science, James's psychology, the idea of organism-environment interaction, Jane Addams' social work, and the relation between evolution and ethics. In the second part of the course, we will focus on pragmatism as an explicit philosophical approach: Dewey's instrumental logic, the link between philosophy and social practice, James's radical empiricism and *Pragmatism* (1907), G.H. Mead's account of the social self, and Dewey's aesthetics and politics. Finally, we will discuss the influence of pragmatism on more recent analytic philosophy: the connection between pragmatism and logical positivism, critiques of the 'God's Eye' view, and Richard Rorty's anti-philosophy.

Required Texts

Houser & Kloesel (eds.), *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 1 [September 8-22]
James, *Principles of Psychology* (Dover), Vol. 1
James, *Pragmatism* (Dover)

These three texts (please use specified editions) will be available for purchase at the university bookstore. All other texts will be available online at Learn@UW.

Evaluation

10%: Attendance and participation
10%: Discussion questions
15%: Paper prospectus – 300-500 words (**NOVEMBER 8**)
65%: Final paper – 3500 words (**DECEMBER 19**)

Organization

Classes will normally consist of a 20-30 minute lecture, followed by 45-55 minutes of discussion. For each assigned text in each class, one student will open discussion by asking several discussion questions. These may be anything from requests for clarification of specific points to more general questions about the text as a whole. Students will select their own essay topics for the final paper, with my input if desired. Halfway through the class, they will turn in a paper prospectus—an outline and summary of their proposed paper topic. Shortly thereafter, I will meet with each student to discuss his/her prospectus. The final paper will be due during exam period, on December 19, and must be submitted electronically.

Schedule

THE ROOTS OF PRAGMATISM: SCIENCE, EVOLUTION, PSYCHOLOGY, ETHICS

September 6 (no reading)
Introduction

September 8 (29 pp.)
Peirce, "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" (1868)

September 13 (34 pp.)
Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief" (1877)
Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (1878)

September 15 (29 pp.)
Peirce, "The Doctrine of Chances" (1878)
Peirce, "The Probability of Induction" (1878)

September 20 (31 pp.)
Peirce, "The Order of Nature" (1878)
Peirce, "Deduction, Induction, and Hypothesis" (1878)

September 22 (50 pp.)
Peirce, "A Guess at the Riddle" ([1887-88])
Peirce, "The Architecture of Theories" (1891)

September 27 (63 pp.)
James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), vol. 1, pp. 104-127 ("Habit")
James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), vol. 1, pp. 291-329 ("Consciousness of Self" excerpt)

September 29 (67 pp.)
James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), vol. 1, pp. 224-290 ("Stream of Thought")

October 4 (57 pp.)
James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), vol. 1, pp. 402-458 ("Attention")

October 6 (35 pp.)

Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*, 2nd ed. (1870), 1:3.1 (“Life and Mind as Correspondence”)

James, “Remarks on Spencer’s Definition of Mind as Correspondence” (1878)

Allen, “Nation-Making: A Theory of National Characters” (1878)

James, “Great Men, Great Thoughts, and the Environment” (1880)

October 11 (29 pp.)

Dewey, “The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology” (1896)

Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed” (1897)

Mead, “The Child and his Environment” (1898)

October 13 (63 pp.)

Addams, “The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements” (1893)

Addams, “The Objective Value of the Social Settlement” (1893)

Addams, “A Modern Lear” ([1896])

October 18 (66 pp.)

Huxley, “Evolution and Ethics. Prolegomena” (1894)

Dewey, “Evolution and Ethics” (1898)

October 20 (46 pp.)

James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” (1891)

James, “The Will to Believe” (1896)

October 25 (50 pp.)

Dewey, “The Evolutionary Method as Applied to Morality” (1902)

Mead, “The Philosophical Basis of Ethics” (1908)

THE PRAGMATIC APPROACH: INQUIRY, TRUTH, POLITICS, AESTHETICS

October 27 (45 pp.)

James, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results” (1898)

Peirce, “What Pragmatism Is” (1905)

November 1 (41 pp.)

Dewey, “The Significance of the Problem of Knowledge” (1897)

Addams, “A Function of the Social Settlement” (1899)

November 3 (27 pp.)

Dewey, “Thought and its Subject-Matter: The General Problem of Logical Theory” (1903)

James, “The Chicago School” (1904)

November 8 (34 pp.)

James, “A World of Pure Experience” (1904)

James, “The Thing and its Relations” (1905)

PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE

November 10 (32 pp.)

James, *Pragmatism* (1907), Lectures 1-2

November 15 (43 pp.)
James, *Pragmatism* (1907), Lectures 3-5

November 17 (50 pp.)
James, *Pragmatism* (1907), Lectures 6-8

November 22 (13 pp.)
Mead, "The Mechanism of Social Consciousness" (1912)
Mead, "The Social Self" (1913)

November 29 (50 pp.)
Dewey, "Philosophy and Democracy" (1919)
Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (1927), Chapter 1 ("Search for the Public")

December 1 (55 pp.)
Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934), Chapter 1 ("The Live Creature")
Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934), Chapter 2 ("The Live Creature and 'Ethereal Things'")
Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934), Chapter 3 ("Having an Experience")

PRAGMATISM AND ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

December 6 (20 pp.)
Lewis, "A Pragmatic Conception of the A Priori" (1923)
Morris, "The Relation of the Formal and Empirical Sciences..." (1935)

December 8 (45 pp.)
Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology" (1950)
Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951)

December 13 (43 pp.)
Goodman, "Words, Works, Worlds" (1975)
Putnam, "Two Philosophical Perspectives" (1981)

December 15 (48 pp.)
Rorty, "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism" (1980)
Haack, "Vulgar Pragmatism: An Unedifying Prospect" (1995)
Rorty, "Response" (1995)

December 19
PAPER DUE