Classical American Philosophy: American Pragmatism

HUHI 6314: Thought, Culture, and Society in the United States

Syllabus

Course Information

Summer II 2010 MW 1:00pm–5:30pm (but see below)

Contact Information

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Office Location JO 5.708
Office Hours Tuesday 11:00am-12:00pm, Wednesday 11:30am-12:30pm, & by appointment.

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

Prior experience with philosophy or progressive-era American history would be helpful, but is not prerequisite.

Course Description

This course will focus on America's most prominent, original philosophical tradition: pragmatism. American pragmatism is a diverse tradition, united by a common interest in the embedding of theory in practice, the fallibility of our knowledge, and a robust account of human experience. We will focus on four of the classical pragmatists (C.S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and Jane Addams) and one neo-pragmatist (Richard Rorty).

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of several major figures in the American philosophical tradition of Pragmatism, their lives, relationships to one another, and their major philosophical ideas.
- Students will analyze and interpret a significant body of primary works in the American pragmatist tradition.
- Students will engage with a variety of secondary sources on the period and figures of study.
- Students will develop their skills of critical analysis and philosophical argumentation.

Required Texts

Abbreviations in [brackets] are used to give page numbers for readings in the course schedule below.

- *Pragmatism: A Reader* - ed. Louis Menand [PR]
- *The Metaphysical Club* - Louis Menand [MC]
- *Democracy and Social Ethics* - Jane Addams [DS]

Recommended Texts

- *Companion to Pragmatism* - ed. Shook + Margolis [CP]
  - Available online in eBook form from UTD library (limited number of people can use at the same time). Available in paper book form where the textbooks are available.

Pragmatism Resources

- The most systematic repository of research, information, and links is the *Pragmatism Cybrary* at [http://www.pragmatism.org/]
- UTD has the PastMasters digital collection, which includes the complete works and correspondence of John Dewey.

Course Schedule

Prior to the start of classes

The Metaphysical Club by Louis Menand is a fantastic history / intellectual biography of the major figures of the American pragmatist tradition. Given the requirements of the course, the organization of this book presents two problems: (1) the first major part of the book is on an important figure, O.W. Holmes, Jr., who we unfortunately do not have time to cover in the course, and (2) the book somewhat incongruously presents William James prior to C.S. Peirce, whereas any discussion of the development of pragmatist philosophy must go in the opposite direction, starting with Peirce. In order to preserve Menand's narrative, it would be best to read the first two parts of the book prior to the readings for the first week of class. Luckily, the book is well-written, an enjoyable and relatively easy read.

Read prior to the beginning of the course:

- Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, Preface + Part One [MC ix–70]
- Menand, "An Introduction to Pragmatism," [PR xi-xxxv]
- Margolis, "Introduction: Pragmatism, Retrospective, and Prospective," [CP 1–10] - also on e-reserve through the library.

Strongly recommended reading prior to beginning the course:

- Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, Part Two [MC 71–148]

Daily schedule of readings

The indicated readings are to be read prior to that day's class. Plan ahead to deal with the compressed nature of the course

1. Intro + C.S. Peirce I (7/5)

    - "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" [PR 3–6]
    - "The Fixation of Belief" [PR 7–25]
    - *Metaphysical Club* Part Three [MC 149–232]
    - *Recommended:* Colapietro, "C.S. Peirce" [CP 13–29]

2. C.S. Peirce II (7/7)

    - "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" [PR 26–48]
    - from "A Guess at the Riddle" [PR 49–51]
    - from "Evolutionary Love" [PR 52–55]
    - "A Definition of Pragmatism" [PR 56–58]

- *Recommended:* Haack, "Not Cynicism, but Synechism" [CP 141–53]; Anderson, "Peirce and Cartesian Rationalism" [CP 154–165]

3. William James I (7/12)

   - from *The Principles of Psychology* [PR 59–68]
   - "The Will to Believe" [PR 69–92]
   - Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, Part Two [MC 71–148]
   - *Recommended:* Suckiel, "William James" [CP 30–43]

4. William James II (7/14)

   - "What Pragmatism Means" [PR 93–111]
   - "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth" [PR 112–131]
   - from *A Pluralistic Universe* [PR 132–135]
   - *Recommended:* Sprigge, "James, Empiricism, and Absolute Idealism" [CP 166–176]

5. John Dewey I (7/19)

   - "The Ethics of Democracy" [PR 181–204]
   - "Theories of Knowledge" [PR 205–218]
   - Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, Part Four [MC 233–334]
   - *Recommended:* Jackson, "John Dewey" [CP 54–66]

6. John Dewey II (7/21)

   - from "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy" [PR 219–232]
   - "Experience, Nature, and Art" [PR 233–264]
   - "I Believe" [265–271]
   - *Recommended:* Alexander, "Dewey, Dualism, and Naturalism" [CP 184–192]

7. Jane Addams I (7/26)

   - from "A Function of the Social Settlement" [PR 272–286]
   - Haddock Seigfried, "Introduction" [DS ix-xxxviii]
   - "Introduction" to *Democracy and Social Ethics* [DS 5–10]
   - "Charitable Effort" [DS 11–34]
   - "Filial Relations" [DS 35–47]
   - *Recommended:* Fischer, "Jane Addams" [CP 79–86]

8. Jane Addams II (7/28)

   - "Household Adjustment" [DS 48–62]
   - "Industrial Amelioration" [DS 63–79]
   - "Educational Methods" [DS 80–97]
   - "Political Reform" [DS 98–120]
   - *Recommended:* Hamington, "Jane Addams" [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/addams-jane/]; Sullivan, "Feminism" [CP 232–238]

9. Richard Rorty I (8/2)

   - "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing" [PR 303–328]
   - "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism" [PR 329–336]
   - Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, Part Five [MC 335–442]
   - *Recommended:* Ramberg, "Richard Rorty" [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rorty/]

10. Richard Rorty II + Closing (8/4)

   - "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" [ereserves]
   - "Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritariamism"[CP 257–266]
   - "Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism" [ereserves]
   - *Recommended:* Nielson, "Richard Rorty" [CP 127–138];

Assignments

1. In-class presentation on a major American philosopher connected to Pragmatism, broadly construed (10–15 minutes).

2. Term paper (15–20 pages).

Evaluation Standards

The following is a clarification for the purposes of this course of UTD's official policy with respect to grading standards.

- An **A** grade indicates *excellent* work. **A** work has something to say and says it well. It displays a subtle and nuanced understanding of the texts, develops arguments clearly and effectively, and reflects insightfully on the course material. It often rises above other work in terms of creativity and sophistication, or it may add something valuable to the discussion that goes beyond merely fulfilling the letter of the requirements. Only few, minor mistakes are present.
- A **B** grade indicates *good* work, but with room for improvement. Such work displays a clear understanding of the text, develops arguments consistently with a clear aim, and is thoughtful and careful. The presence of serious errors must not impair the clarity of an argument or the overall understanding of a text. **B** work is in many ways successful, but lacks the sophistication or originality of **A** work.
- A **C** grade indicates *marginal* work. It shows a basically adequate understanding of the key parts of the text. Arguments aim at a central claim, though they may rely on unsupported or insufficiently developed ideas. More serious errors may be present, so long as the central claims and basic understandings are not undermined.
- Work which deserves a grade less than **C** is considered *poor* and will display some of the following problems: it fails to show adequate understanding of the text; it fails to understand the assignment; it fails to articulate a coherent or adequate argument; it fails to reflect on the content of the course; it displays such pervasive grammatical errors as to be highly obscure in meaning.

+/- grades *will* be assigned, indicating work that goes a bit beyond or falls only somewhat short of the standards stated above.

Course & Instructor Policies

Late Work / Make-up Exams

No late work or make-up exams will be allowed without consent of the professor *prior* to the due/exam date, except in situations where University policy requires it.

Class Attendance

While reading and writing are crucial parts of the course, the central philosophical activity is live discussion. While class will occasionally involve bits of lecture, this is merely an instrument to a more well-informed discussion. Attendance is thus considered **mandatory**.

Classroom expectations

You are expected to have read the assignments *before* class, and it would be to your benefit to also read them again after class. You are expected to bring *all* of the texts assigned for each day's class, and have them available to refer to. You are expected to listen respectfully to the professor and your fellow students, and participate in class discussions and activities.

Technical Support

If you experience any problems with your UTD account you may send an email to: assist@utdallas.edu or call the UTD Helpdesk at 972 883–2911.

Student Conduct & Discipline

The University of Texas System and The University of Texas at Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the UTD printed publication, A to Z Guide, which is provided to all registered students each academic year.

The University of Texas at Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the Rules and Regulations, Series 50000, Board of Regents, The University of Texas System, and in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities of the university's Handbook of Operating Procedures. Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SU 1.602, 972/883–6391) and online at
http://www.utdallas.edu/judicialaffairs/UTDJudicialAffairs-HOPV.html

A student at the university neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the Regents' Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating the standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work.

Scholastic Dishonesty, any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

Plagiarism, especially from the web, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalog for details). This course will use the resources of turnitin.com, which searches the web for possible plagiarism and is over 90% effective.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials, including music and software. Copying, displaying, reproducing, or distributing copyrighted works may infringe the copyright owner's rights and such infringement is subject to appropriate disciplinary action as well as criminal penalties provided by federal law. Usage of such material is only appropriate when that usage constitutes "fair use" under the Copyright Act. As a UT Dallas student, you are required to follow the institution's copyright policy (Policy Memorandum 84-I.3–46). For more information about the fair use exemption, see
http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/copypol2.htm

Email Use

The University of Texas at Dallas recognizes the value and efficiency of communication between faculty/staff and students through electronic mail. At the same time, email raises some issues concerning security and the identity of each individual in an email exchange. The university encourages all official student email correspondence be sent only to a student's U.T. Dallas email address and that faculty and staff consider email from students official only if it originates from a UTD student account. This allows the university to maintain a high degree of confidence in the identity of all individual corresponding and the security of the transmitted information. UTD furnishes each student with a free email account that is to be used in all communication with university personnel. The Department of Information Resources at U.T. Dallas provides a method for students to have their U.T. Dallas mail forwarded to other accounts. Withdrawal from Class

The administration of this institution has set deadlines for withdrawal of any college-level courses. These dates and times are published in that semester's course catalog. Administration procedures must be followed. It is the student's responsibility to handle withdrawal requirements from any class. In other words, I cannot drop or withdraw any student. You must do the proper paperwork to ensure that you will not receive a final grade of "F" in a course if you choose not to attend the class once you are enrolled.

Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities, of the university's Handbook of Operating Procedures.

In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding grades, evaluations, or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance originates (hereafter called "the respondent"). Individual faculty members retain primary responsibility for assigning grades and evaluations. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the grievance must be submitted in writing to the respondent with a copy of the respondent's School Dean. If the matter is not resolved by the written response provided by the respondent, the student may submit a written appeal to the School Dean. If the grievance is not resolved by the School Dean's decision, the student may make a written appeal to the Dean of Graduate or Undergraduate Education, and the deal will appoint and convene an Academic Appeals Panel. The decision of the Academic Appeals Panel is final. The results of the academic appeals process will be distributed to all involved parties.

Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations.

Incomplete Grade Policy

As per university policy, incomplete grades will be granted only for work unavoidably missed at the semester's end and only if 70% of the course work has been completed. An incomplete grade must be resolved within eight (8) weeks from the first day of the subsequent long semester. If the required work to complete the course and to remove the incomplete grade is not submitted by the specified deadline, the incomplete grade is changed automatically to a grade of F.

Disability Services

The goal of Disability Services is to provide students with disabilities educational opportunities equal to those of their non-disabled peers. Disability Services is located in room 1.610 in the Student Union. Office hours are Monday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The contact information for the Office of Disability Services is: The University of Texas at Dallas, SU 22 PO Box 830688 Richardson, Texas 75083–0688 (972) 883–2098 (voice or TTY) disabilityservice@utdallas.edu

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with the Coordinator of Disability Services. The Coordinator is available to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with Disability Services to notify them of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. Disability Services can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

It is the student's responsibility to notify his or her professors of the need for such an accommodation. Disability Services provides students with letters to present to faculty members to verify that the student has a disability and needs accommodations. Individuals requiring special accommodation should contact the professor after class or during office hours.

Religious Holy Days

The University of Texas at Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities for the travel to and observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, Tax Code, Texas Code Annotated.

The student is encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment. The student, so excused, will be allowed to take the exam or complete the assignment within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the chief executive officer of the institution, or his or her designee. The chief executive officer or designee must take into account the legislative intent of TEC 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the chief executive officer or designee.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.