Pragmatism (PHIL 3920) CRN 64720 and (PHIL 5310) CRN 68373
Fall 2017
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Office Hours: Tuesdays: 2-3 pm and by appointment (I’m always around!)

Topic
Pragmatism is perhaps the most important movement in American philosophy, yet students rarely learn about its history. Furthermore, the main themes of pragmatist thinkers such as C.S. Peirce and William James had wide ranging influence on all areas of thought. In this course, we will learn about the early history of pragmatism and learn what the main tenets of pragmatism are. We will learn about the pragmatic maxim and theory of truth and explore how these inform views about inquiry, religious belief, democracy, and economics. The course will focus primarily on the work of Charles Peirce and William James, but we will also explore the thoughts of later pragmatists such as Frank Ramsey, John Dewey, and Hilary Putnam.

Course Materials
* Philosophical Writings of Charles Peirce
  Charles S. Peirce (Author), Justus Buchler (Editor); Dover Publications (2011)
* Pragmatism and Other Writings
  William James (Author), Giles Gunn (Editor); Penguin Classics; New edition (2000)
  * Other course readings will be available on the course website.

Requirements
* Participation (5% total) Your participation grade will primarily come into affect if you are close to the grade up or grade down. See Grading policies below.
* Weekly Written Responses (20%) There will be an online forum for discussion where you will be asked to submit your comments and thoughts prior to class. If you give a good faith effort on a response, you will receive a passing grade. If you do an exceptional job on a response, then you will receive extra credit. If you do a very poor job on a response, then you will receive a failing grade. In lieu of these online discussions, I will sometimes ask you to complete written reflections that you will present for class discussion.
* Quizzes (25%) There will be about 8-11 quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes be short and unannounced. They are meant to ensure that you complete the reading.
* Two Written Assignments and one revision (50%) You will write two substantial papers. The first written assignment will be revise and resubmitted. Each paper will be on a different major figure in pragmatism. You will be asked to provide an exposition and critical discussion of one of the arguments for their views. The first paper (4-5 pages) will be worth 10%, the revised paper (2-3 pages) will be worth 20%. The second paper (4-5 pages) will be worth 20%.

NB: Your scores for each component of the final grade are weighted according to the percentages here. If you don’t know how to calculate a weighted grade, please ask. You are responsible for keeping track of your grade.
Tentative Course Schedule

1. Introduction and Historical Background
2. The Pragmatic Core
   (a) The Pragmatic Maxim
   (b) The Pragmatist’s Theory of Truth
   (c) The Fixation of Belief and the Progress of Science (Assignment: Essay #1)
3. Applications of Pragmatism
   (a) Pragmatism and Religious Belief (Assignment: Essay Revision)
   (b) Pragmatism and Probability
   (c) Pragmatism and Democracy (Assignment: Essay #2)
   (d) Pragmatism and Economics
   (e) Pragmatism and Skepticism

Class Policies

- First and foremost, this class is meant to be a safe environment of mutual respect. For that reason, the following two policies apply: (1) NO LAPTOP USE in class unless you come to speak to me first about it. (2) Put your cellphones away and silence them. If you use your cellphone in class, I will ask you to leave the class. In addition to being asked to leave, if you continue to use your cellphones, you will receive a 0% on your participation grade and if you miss a pop-quiz, you will receive a 0% on that quiz.
- No late written responses, no make-up quizzes. Don’t ask as there will be no exceptions. However, I know that things come up so for this reason, I will remove the lowest quiz/written response score and replace it with your highest quiz/written response score.
- You must complete every writing assignment to receive an A in the class.
- For those of you who are regularly prepared for class discussion, I reserve the right to raise your grade if it is somewhat borderline between two letter grades.
- Email Policy: I usually set aside a time in the late afternoon (before 4pm) each weekday to reply to emails. If you email me before then I will typically reply the same day, otherwise, I will reply the next day. Also, if you ask me a question whose answer can be found either on the syllabus or on the class website, then you will not receive an answer. So if you don’t receive an email within a day or two, then it means the answer is on the syllabus or the website.
- The participation grade is meant to reward those who regularly attend AND participate in class. An A means that you did both, a B means that you simply attended, a C means that you missed a significant amount of class (> 4 classes), a D or F means that you were a distraction in class and/or you missed much of class (> 6 classes). This grade will affect those who are on the borderline (e.g. a good participation grade can raise you from a borderline B to A; a bad participation grade can lower you from a borderline B to C)
- As a matter of fairness, there will be no extra credit offered on an individual basis.
Academic Honesty

Oklahoma State University is committed to the maintenance of the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct of its members. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, fabricating information, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and fraudulently altering academic records) will result in your being sanctioned. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript (F!), and being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal the charge. Contact the Office of Academic Affairs, 101 Whitehurst, 405-744-5627, academicintegrity.okstate.edu.

For further information about university policies, see: https://academicaffairs.okstate.edu/sites/default/files/Fall%202017%20Syllabus%20Attachment.pdf