

COURSE SYLLABUS

Fall 2008

PHI 290 Special Topic: American Philosophy
TR (8:50 PM-10:00 AM)
Classroom: Memorial Hall 303

Instructor: Dr. Bernie Cantens
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Office Hours: W 11:00 AM – 11:00 AM
 T 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
 MF 10:00AM -12:00 By Appointment

Text

Pragmatism Old and New Edited by Susan Haack with associate editor Robert Lane. Prometheus Books: New York, 2006.

ISBN – 13:978-159103459-3 / ISBN – 10: 159102359-9 / 741 pages.

Course Description

This course presents a comprehensive view of Classical American Philosophy from 1860's to the 20th Century. It begins with the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), founder of American Pragmatism, and William James (1842-1910). The course also studies the influence of Pragmatism on contemporary philosophy in the US and abroad through the works of John Dewey (1859-1952), George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), Ferdinand Canning, Scott Schiller (1864-1937), Frank Plumpton Ramsey (1903-1930), Morton G. White (1917-), Willard van Orman Quine (1908-2000), Nelson Goodman (1906-1998), Hilary Putnam (1926-), and Richard Rorty (1931-2007).

Relationship of course to university mission

A quality liberal arts education must take into account the ability to reflect across the spectrum of disciplines. This task requires skills of analysis of basic concepts and principles, reading and writing skills, and a constructively critical attitude. The study of philosophy is an integral part of the Moravian Learning in Common insofar as it helps students develop these cognitive skills.

Course objectives

The objectives of this course are the following: (1) to introduce students to the origins of American Pragmatism through the writings of Peirce and James; (2) to introduce students to the philosophical fundamentals of American Pragmatism; (3) to introduce students to the pluralistic nature of American Pragmatism; (4) to expose students to the various versions of Pragmatism; (5) to introduce students to the influence and development of American Pragmatism in the 20th Century; (6) to present to students the interdisciplinary aspect of pragmatism.

Learning Outcomes

The following outcomes are expected of the students who complete this course:

(1) Students should have a basic and general knowledge of the origins of American Pragmatism. (2) Students should have a basic understanding of the fundamental philosophical concepts of American Pragmatism. (3) Students should be able to distinguish among the various historical strands of Pragmatism. (4) Students should have an understanding of the philosophical concepts that distinguish the different versions of pragmatism. (5) Students should have a basic understanding Peirce's version of Pragmaticism and should be familiar with his writings. (6) Students should have an understanding of Jame's version of Pragmatism and should be familiar with his writings. (7) Students should have an understanding of the development and influence of pragmatism in the 20th century. (8) Students should have a deeper insight, understanding and appreciation of American culture in general,

Assessment

2 Reflection Papers and Presentations (50 points)

Students will complete a philosophical reflection paper of 5 to 7 pages on a topic directly related to this course. The students will be graded according to four criteria: (1) Whether the introduction has a clear and explicit thesis and organized developing statements; (2) Whether the paper is well organized and demonstrates a logical flow of ideas; (3) Whether there are well constructed and developed arguments and/or well developed critical explanations of philosophical problems and solutions; and (4) Whether the writing skills, such as word use, sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation are correct.

Students will present their work to the class on the day the selected topic is scheduled to be covered. The presentation will not be graded.

2 Exams (50 Points)

There will be two exams throughout the semester. Each exam is worth 20% of the final grade. The exam will be composed of essays and short answers.

Exam 1: October 2, 2008

Exam 2: December 15-18, 2008

Chronological Order of Assignments and Exams

September 25, 2008 Reflection Paper	(25 points)
October 2, 2008 Exam 1	(25 points)
December 9, 2008 Reflection Paper	(25 points)
December 15-18, 2008 Exam 2	(25 points)

Learning Methods

Multimedia This course will combine traditional classroom lecturing with multimedia presentations. Every lecture will be supplemented with power point presentations and internet information. All course materials, such as syllabus, review questions, term paper information, etc., are posted on my web site <http://berniephilosophy.com> site. This will give the students direct access to most of the materials at their convenience.

Black Board: Some basic information and assignments provided through black board.

Class Dynamic Class participation is expected of all students enrolled in this course. Questions and class discussions are encouraged as an effective vehicle to motivate the student's interest in the subject matter. *If there are few questions and little discussion taking place in the classroom, the professor reserves the right to choose individual students to answer questions or give their view and the arguments on a particular issue.* Therefore, careful daily reading of the text and handouts is essential for success in this course. The exams will consist of identification, multiple choice and essay-form questions.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory. Students will lose 1 point for every unexcused absence up to a possible 5 points. Students can make up lost points in unexcused absences by actively participating in class discussions. Unexcused absences included only the following: (1) sickness with a doctors' note, (2) death in the family, or (3) some other extraordinary event.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

See Student Handbook pp. 32 – 38

Student Behavior:

See Student Handbook pp. 38 – 40

Course Requirements

Reading of required text on a daily basis is essential to succeed in this course. Students are expected to be ready for class. This means that he or she should read the assigned chapters before the professor introduces it. Class participation, note taking, and discussion are highly encouraged. The study of philosophy does not only consist of memorization; students must also read analytically and reflect critically on the reading. When studying difficult material, it is often necessary to read it several times before a proper understanding is achieved. Do not be disappointed if you do not understand a philosophical text on your first reading.

Grading/Measures of evaluations:

Reflection Paper and Presentation:	25%
Exam 1:	25%
Exam 2:	25%
Reflection Paper and Presentation:	25%

A=100-93; A- =92-90; B+=89-87; B=86-84; B- = 83-80; C+=79-77; C = 76-70;
D=69-60; F=<59

PROGRAM AND READING ASSIGNMENTS
Lists of Readings, assignments, Exams and Dates:

Week 1	I. INTRODUCTION: What is American Philosophy? James: What Pragmatism Means (1906) pp. 289-308.
Week 2	II. PRAGMATISM: HOW DID IT ALL BEGAN? Peirce: The Consequences of Four Incapacities (1868) pp. 69-105.
Week 3	Peirce: The Fixation of Belief (1877) pp. 107-126. Peirce: How To Make Our Ideas Clear (1878) pp. 127-150.
Week 4	James: What Pragmatism Means (1906) pp. 289-308 (re-visited). James: The Will to Believe (1896) pp. 221-146.
Week 5	Peirce: Pragmatism and Pragmaticism (1902, 1905 and 1907) pp. 151-167.
Week 6	Dewey: School Conditions and the Training of Thought (1910) pp. 331-340. Dewey: Quest for Certainty (1929) pp. 379-394. EXAM 1
Week 7	III. PRAGMATISM, METAPHYSICS AND TRUTH Peirce: The Categories (1903) pp. 177-208. James: Pragmatism's Conception of Truth (1906) pp. 309-327.
Week 8	Dewey: Truth and Consequences (1911) pp. 341-361. Dewey: Common Sense and Scientific Inquiry (1938) pp. 443-463.
Week 9	Schiller: The Making of Truth (1907) pp. 487-509. Ramsey: Belief, Truth, and Inference (1926) pp. 511-516.
Week 10	Putnam: Is There Anything to Say about Reality and Truth? (1987) pp. 621-633. Rorty: Pragmatism, Relativism and Irrationalism (1979) pp. 635-655.
Week 11	IV. PRAGMATISM, ETHICS AND SOCIAL-POLITICAL THOUGHT James: The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life (1891) pp. 247-272.

	Dewey: The Construction of Good (1929) pp. 395-422.
Week 12	Dewey: Philosophy and Democracy (1919) pp. 363-378.
Week 13	Mead: Mind, Self and Society (1934) pp. 465-476 Mead: The Social Self (1913) pp. 477-485.
Week 14 Week 15	V. 20 th CENTURY AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY White: The Analytic and the Synthetic an Untenable Dualism (1950) pp. 559-574. Quine: Natural Kinds (1969) pp. 575-597. Goodman: Words, Works, Worlds (1975) pp. 599-620.
	FINAL EXAM

PLEASE, as a courtesy to the other students in the class, turn off all telephones upon entering class!