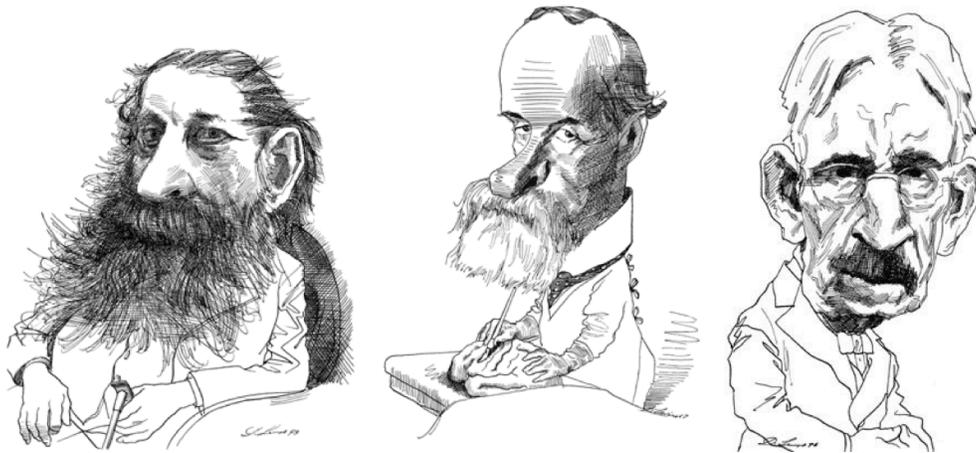


American Pragmatism

Philosophy 452
10:20am-11:20am
Bodine 004



The classical American pragmatists Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey

My Information

Here it is:

Dr. Jay Odenbaugh
Department of Philosophy
Lewis & Clark College
(503)768-7377
jay@lclark.edu
Office hours: TBA

Course Introduction

The American pragmatist philosophers were forged in and around the American Civil War and their own ideas shaped 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. Here are some of the questions we will explore:

- How and to what extent did the American Civil War shape the philosophical views of the classical pragmatists?
- What are the views of Peirce, James, Dewey and their associates?
- Is pragmatism currently a distinctive philosophical view or are we all pragmatists now?
- What does pragmatism offer us as a philosophical view?

Course Materials

There are three required texts:

- *Democracy and Social Ethics* (2001) Jane Addams. University of Illinois Press.
- *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy: Essential Readings and Interpretive Essays*, Second Edition, Edited by John J. Stuhr, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* by Louis Menand, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

The rest of our readings will be made available electronically.

Course Requirements

In this course, your grade will be determined by the following:

- Paper
 - Outline 5%
 - Rough Draft 25%
 - Final Paper 35%
- Short reports (5 × 5%)
- Blogging (10%)

Papers

You will write a rough draft and a final paper. The paper should have a well-defined thesis that is clearly argued. The essay should be without spelling and grammatical errors. What follows is a rough indication of what I look for in grading papers.

A, 90+, Excellent – Papers receiving a grade in this range clearly demonstrate advanced understanding of the basic concepts and issues in the text(s). In addition, these papers provide a sustained argument and critique of the text or provide substantial and interesting questions concerning the interpretation of the text. The paper as a whole is tightly focused and well-organized. Errors in grammar or spelling are nonexistent.

B, 80-89, Good – Papers receiving a grade in this range demonstrate a basic, but thorough, understanding of basic concepts and issues. Where understanding is lacking, an earnest attempt at interpreting the author is evident. In addition, these responses show a somewhat successful attempt at critical examination, argument, or questioning of the text. The paper as a whole is mostly focused and well-organized. Errors in grammar and spelling are minimal.

C, 2, 70-79, Satisfactory – Papers receiving a grade in this range demonstrate some (possibly incomplete) understanding of basic concepts and issues. In addition, these responses show little or no earnest attempt at interpretation, critical examination, or questioning of the text. Paper lacks focus and is poorly organized. Errors in grammar or spelling are frequent.

D - F, Unsatisfactory – Papers receiving a grade in this range have failed to demonstrate any degree of real understanding of basic concepts and issues, and lack evidence of an earnest attempt to do so.

Short reports

You will write five short reports, each on a specific reading. They are to be at most three pages long. The report should identify an issue or argument that you summarize and critique. They are due before we discuss that article in class.

Blogging

Each week you should contribute to the class blog at least once. During each week, I will write at least one prompt that contains a question, comment, or argument on which you can comment. You can comment on my prompt or on another blogger's post.

Late work

All assignments are due on the scheduled dates. However, if you come to me at least one full day in advance you may have one week's extension, no excuse required. However, be aware that turning in a paper by extension will delay feedback and that you may not have the time you need to improve and develop before the next assignment.

Attendance

This class material is difficult for some students; however, the biggest difficulties arise because students get behind in the readings. To prevent this, you should attend class regularly. Thus, I will allow you to miss a maximum of six classes unpenalized but for each class thereafter you will lose 1% of your final grade.

Grade Scale

The course grading scale is as follows:

A = 93 – 100, A- = 90 – 92, B+ = 86 – 89, B = 83 – 85, B- = 80 – 82, C+ = 76 – 79, C = 73 – 75, C- = 70 – 72, D+ = 66 – 69, D = 60 – 65, F = 0 – 59

It is impossible to do well in this course without reading and studying. I suggest that you *carefully* read the assigned material taking notes on what you read. You are strongly encouraged to discuss the course material with others outside of class. I am happy to help you outside of class. That is why I keep office hours.

Plagiarism

All students are expected to follow Lewis & Clark College's Academic Integrity Policy. This is stated in Lewis Clark College's College Catalog. Generally, plagiarizers and cheaters will be given an F for the entire course (they will not be allowed to drop or withdraw from the course). Also, your case will be given to the Honor Board where in addition to a failing grade you will receive disciplinary action.

Learning Differences

If you have been diagnosed with a learning difference and are seeking an accommodation, please provide me, as soon as possible, with a "Notice of Disability and Statement of Accommodation" from Dale Hollaway, Coordinator of Student Support Services.

Tentative Schedule

Here is our schedule, which is of course revisable.

Week 1 *The Metaphysical Club*

- *The Metaphysical Club*, pgs. 3 - 72

Week 2 Emerson and *The Metaphysical Club*

- Emerson, "The American Scholar" and "Self-Reliance"
- *The Metaphysical Club*, pgs. 73-150

Week 3 Peirce and *The Metaphysical Club*

- Peirce, "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities"; "The Fixation of Belief"; "How to Make Our Ideas Clear"
- *The Metaphysical Club*, pgs. 151-201

Week 4 Peirce

- "The Doctrine of Necessity Examined"; "The Categories and the Study of Signs"; "What Pragmatism Is";

Week 5 Peirce concluded and James

- Peirce, “Issues of Pragmatism”; “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God”
- James, “The Types of Philosophic Thinking”

Week 6 James

- “The Stream of Thought”; “A World of Pure Experience”; “What Pragmatism Means”;

Week 7 James

- “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”; “The Dilemma of Determinism”; “The Will to Believe”

Week 8 Dewey and *The Metaphysical Club*

- *The Metaphysical Club*, pgs. 235-337
- Dewey, “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy”; “The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism”

Week 9 Dewey

- “Experience and Philosophic Method”; “Existence as Precarious and Stable”; “Nature, Communication, and Meaning”; “The Pattern of Inquiry”

Week 10 Dewey

- John Dewey, “Education as Growth”; “The Lost Individual”; “Search for the Great Community”; “The Live Creature and Aesthetic Experience”; “Faith and Its Object”

Week 11 Addams

- Jane Addams, “A Function of the Social Settlement”
- Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*

Week 12 Contemporary Pragmatism

- *The Metaphysical Club*, pgs. 337-409
- Hilary Putnam, “Realism with a Human Face”; “A Reconsideration of Deweyan Democracy”

Week 13 Contemporary Pragmatism

- Richard Rorty, “The World Well Lost”; “Solidarity or Objectivity?”; “The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy”
- Cornell West, “Prophetic Pragmatism”

Week 14 Contemporary Pragmatism

- Robert Brandom, “From Truth to Semantics”
- Huw Price, “Truth as Convenient Friction”
- Cheryl Misak, “Making Disagreement Matter”