

Philosophy 112: American Philosophy American Pragmatism on Truth and Justification

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What makes our assertions, theories, and beliefs true and justified? How can we ascertain the veracity and validity of our scientific knowledge, moral views, and even emotional states? What do action and communication have to do, if anything, with truth and justification? These philosophical questions are usually interpreted and analyzed within the tradition of Analytic Philosophy, which focuses mainly on syntactic structures and semantic relations, and deemphasizes pragmatic context. From this vantage point, American Pragmatism is seen as hopeless or even irrelevant for understanding truth and justification. Without losing sight of the strengths of Analytic Philosophy, this class explores the ways in which Pragmatism actually elucidates these two core philosophical concepts. Furthermore, examining these questions provides a productive entry-point for understanding what Pragmatism itself is. We will see that Pragmatism brings to the fore the relevance of human intervention, as well as communal interaction and norms, for assessing truth and securing justification.

The first readings briefly introduce the issues of truth and justification. We then turn to key texts by the classical Pragmatist: C.S. Peirce, William James and John Dewey. We also discuss papers by two of their contemporaneous critics, Bertrand Russell and Hans Reichenbach. The last part of the course discusses work by important thinkers, with strong pragmatic roots, from the latter half of the 20th century: WVO Quine, Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty and Jürgen Habermas. Each text is discussed in light of the concepts of truth and justification.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Bi-weekly 1 page summaries (starting Thursday January 17). (20%)
2. 1 Short Paper (5-7 pages), due MONDAY February 25, by 5 pm in my office. (20%)
3. Take-home midterm due MONDAY February 4, by 5 pm in my office. (20%)
4. Final, Tuesday March 18, 12-3 pm. (30%)
5. Participation in class and in section. Attendance will be taken and there will be "random questioning". (10%)

- You must satisfy each requirement in order to pass the course.

- One third of a letter grade will be deducted per day for any late papers and midterm (e.g., a B+ becomes a B, etc.).

TAs

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Please direct all questions about grading, assignments, etc. to your TAs. They will contact me if necessary.

I look forward to talking with you about Philosophy. Please come to my office hours or make an appointment.

WARNING

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Please consult:

http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/index.html

READINGS

ALL TEXTS ARE IN THE COURSE READER

Week 1 (1/8, 1/10): Truth

1. Glanzberg, Michael, "Truth", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2006 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2006/entries/truth/>.

2. Devitt M., Sterelny, K. 1987. *Language and Reality. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. "Truth and Reference", Chapter 2, pp. 15-38. MIT Press.

3. Devitt M. 1991. *Realism and Truth*. 2nd edition. "What is Truth?", Chapter 3, pp. 26-38. Blackwell.

Week 2 (1/15, 1/17): Justification

4. Fumerton, Richard, "Foundationalist Theories of Epistemic Justification", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2006 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2006/entries/justep-foundational/>.

5. Audi, R. 1998. *Epistemology. A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. "Inference and the Extension of Knowledge", Chapter 6, pp. 155-182. London: Routledge.

6. Kusch, M. 2002. *Knowledge by Agreement. The Programme of Communitarian Epistemology*. "Foundationalism and Coherentism", Chapter 8, pp. 91-101. Oxford UP.

Week 3 (1/22, 1/24): Charles Sanders Peirce

7. Houser N, Kloesel C. (ed.) 1992 *The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings (1867-1893). Volume 1*. Indiana University Press.

- "The Fixation of Belief" (1877), Chapter 7, pp. 109-123

- "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (1878), Chapter 8, pp. 124-141.

8. Peirce Edition Project (ed.) 1998. *The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings (1893-1913). Volume 2.* "What is a Sign?" (1894), Chapter 2, pp. 4-10. Indiana University Press.

Week 4 (1/29, 1/31): William James

9. James, W. 1977. *The Writings of William James. A Comprehensive Edition.* McDermott (ed.), Harvard University Press.

- "What Pragmatism Means" (originally Ch. 2 in *Pragmatism. A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 1907), pp. 376-390.

- "Some Metaphysical Problems Pragmatically Considered" (originally Ch. 3 in *Pragmatism. A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 1907), pp. 390-404.

- "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth" (originally Ch. 6 in *Pragmatism. A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 1907), pp. 429-443.

10. James, W. 1890(2001). *Psychology. The Briefer Course.* "The Stream of Consciousness" (1890), Chapter 2, pp. 18-42. Dover.

Week 5 (2/5, 2/7): John Dewey: Philosophical Critique

11. Dewey, J. 1925/1929(1958). *Experience and Nature.* "Experience and Philosophic Method", Chapter 1, pp. 1a-39. Dover.

Week 6 (2/12, 2/14): John Dewey: The Positive Project

12. Dewey, J. 1929(1984). *The Quest for Certainty.* Boydston, JA (ed.), *The Later Works (1925-1953)* Vol. 4. "The Play of Ideas", Chapter 6, pp. 112-135. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

13. Dewey, J. 1938(1986). *Logic. The Theory of Inquiry.* Boydston, JA (ed.), *The Later Works (1925-1953)* Vol. 12. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

- "The Pattern of Inquiry", Chapter 6, pp. 105-122.

- "Social Inquiry", Chapter 24, pp. 481-505.

Week 7 (2/19, 2/21): Bertrand Russell and Hans Reichenbach: Criticisms of Pragmatism

14. Russell, B. 1939(1989). "Dewey's New Logic", in Schilpp, PA and Hahn LE (eds.), *The Philosophy of John Dewey. The Library of Living Philosophers*, Chapter 4, pp. 137-156. Open Court.

15. Reichenbach, H. 1939(1989). "Dewey's Theory of Science", in Schilpp, PA and Hahn LE (eds.), *The Philosophy of John Dewey. The Library of Living Philosophers*, Chapter 5, pp. 159-192. Open Court.

Week 8 (2/26, 2/28): WVO Quine and Hilary Putnam

16. Quine, WVO. 1968. Ontological Relativity. *Journal of Philosophy* 65: 185-212.

17. Putnam, H. 1981. *Reason, Truth and History*. "Two Philosophical Perspectives", Chapter 3, pp. 49-74. Cambridge University Press.

Week 9 (3/4, 3/6): Richard Rorty

18. Rorty, R. 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. "The Idea of a 'Theory of Knowledge'", Part 2, Chapter 3, pp. 131-164. Princeton University Press.

19. Rorty, R. 2004. "A pragmatist view of contemporary analytic philosophy", in Egginton W, Sandbothe M. (eds). *The Pragmatic Turn in Philosophy: Contemporary Engagements Between Analytic and Continental Thought*, pp. 131-144. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Week 10 (3/11, 3/13): Jürgen Habermas

20. Habermas, J. 2003. *Truth and Justification*. "Introduction: Realism After the Linguistic Turn", pp. 1-49. MIT Press.