

Pragmatist Political Philosophy: Theories of the Public

Meeting Days and Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00p-3:50p

Meeting Location: Susan Campbell Hall Room 250C

Instructor: Dr. Colin Koopman

Instructor Contact: koopman@uoregon.edu

Course Website: via UO's Canvas CMS

Instructor Office Hours (in Susan Campbell Hall Room 250A) at the following times:

- Wednesdays 1:30-4:00 during odd weeks (i.e., weeks 1, 3, 5, 7, & 9)
- Wednesdays 1:30-3:00 during even weeks (except for week 2)
- Week 2 meetings by appointment only (due to conference travel)
- Meetings by appointment at other times (contingent on instructor availability)

Course Description:

This course will be an advanced upper-level seminar in pragmatist political philosophy. We will explore the anti-foundationalist and anti-absolutist character of pragmatism with an eye to how these perspectives can bring a renewed focus to questions of politics, sociality, and morality without thereby collapsing into relativism. Our readings will cover both classical pragmatisms of the early-twentieth century and more recent neo-pragmatist contributions. Authors, texts, and debates under our survey will focus on two canonical debates in pragmatist political theory.

Both debates raise political questions about what form of democracy is best, epistemological questions about the place of knowledge and truth in democratic politics, and metaphilosophical questions about the role of philosophy vis-à-vis these political and epistemological issues. Both debates also took place between a self-described pragmatist philosopher and another important public intellectual whose thinking also very much bears the stamp of pragmatism.

The first debate, from the 1920s, is that between John Dewey and Walter Lippmann over the role of participation, expertise, and knowledge in democratic publics. The second debate, taking place over the past few decades, is that between Richard Rorty and Jürgen Habermas, over how best to articulate and defend liberal democracy without appeals to unacceptable epistemological foundations.

In terms of course workload, students in this class will be expected to: actively and respectfully contribute to discussions (this will not be a lecture class) and in-class group work, complete all readings, write a very short expository paper early in the class, and write a final research paper in multiple stages.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

9/25	Introduction to the Class <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of Syllabus• Student and Instructor Introductions• Key Figures and Periods in the History of Pragmatism• Basic Concepts of Pragmatism
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	I. Metaphilosophical Orientations: What is Pragmatism?
9/27 10/2 10/4	<p>James, <i>Pragmatism</i> (1906), Lectures I + II Rorty, "Pragmatism, Relativism, & Irrationalism" (1980) + "The Priority of Dmcy. to Phil." (1984) Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy" (1917)</p> <p>[Note: no class mtg Thur 10/4 – instructor conf. travel – readings & online responses still due]</p> <p><u>Additional recommended writings on pragmatist metaphilosophy:</u></p> <p>By Rorty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Pragmatism and Philosophy," introduction to <i>Consequences of Pragmatism</i> (1982) • "Philosophy as Science, As Metaphor, and as Politics" (1989) • "Analytic and Conversational Philosophy" (2003) <p>By Dewey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Changing Conceptions of Philosophy," Ch. 1 of <i>Reconstruction in Philosophy</i> (1920) • "Experience and Philosophic Method," Ch. 1 of <i>Experience and Nature</i> (1925) • "The Future of Philosophy" (1948) <p>Secondary Literature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seigfried, "Pragmatist Metaphysics? Why Terminology Matters" (2001) • Bernstein, "The Pragmatic Century," in <i>The Pragmatic Century</i>, eds. Davaney & Frisina (2006) • Jackman, "The Pragmatic Method," in <i>Oxford Hbk. of Phil. Mthdly.</i>, ed. Cappelen (2016) • Koopman, "Pragmatism," in <i>Understanding James...</i>, ed. Evans (2018)
10/5 Fri.	Short Expository Paper Due (via Canvas upload and email to instructor by 5:00p) <i>See assignment description below.</i>
	II. Classical Pragmatist Political Thought: Participation vs. Expertise in Liberal Democracy
10/9 10/11 10/16	<p>Dewey's Theory of Participation-and-Communication Democracy Dewey, <i>The Public and Its Problems</i> (1927), Chs. 1 & 2 Dewey, <i>The Public and Its Problems</i> (1927), Chs. 3 & 4 Dewey, reviews of Lippmann's <i>Public Opinion</i> (1922) and <i>The Phantom Public</i> (1925) + Dewey, <i>The Public and Its Problems</i> (1927), Chs. 5 & 6</p> <p>[Note: class mtg on Tue 10/16 will begin with group discussion w/o instructor for the first hour]</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Westbrook, <i>John Dewey and American Democracy</i> (1991) Festenstein, <i>Pragmatism and Political Theory: From Dewey to Rorty</i> (1997)</p>
10/18 10/23 10/25	<p>Lippmann's Theory of Expertise-and-Information Democracy Lippmann, <i>Public Opinion</i> (1922), Pts. 1-3 (with special focus on Pt. 1) Lippmann, <i>Public Opinion</i> (1922), Pts. 4-6 (with special focus on Pt. 6) Lippmann, <i>Public Opinion</i> (1922), Pts. 7-8 (with special focus on Pt. 8)</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Steele, <i>Walter Lippmann and the American Century</i> (1980)</p>

III. Contemporary Pragmatist Political Thought: Debating Foundations in Liberal Democracy	
10/30 11/1 11/6 11/8	<p>Rorty's Postfoundational Conversational Liberalism Rorty, <i>Contingency, Irony, & Solidarity</i> (1989), Introduction & Ch. 1 Rorty, <i>Contingency</i> (1989), Ch. 2 & Ch.3 Rorty, <i>Contingency</i> (1989), Ch. 3 (again) & Ch. 4 & Ch. 7 (pp. 141-144 only) Rorty, <i>Contingency</i> (1989), Ch. 7 & Ch. 8 & Ch. 9</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Voparil, <i>Richard Rorty: Politics and Vision</i> (2006) Bacon, <i>Richard Rorty: Pragmatism and Political Liberalism</i> (2007)</p>
11/13 11/15	<p>Habermas's Universalist Dialogical Liberalism Habermas, <i>The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity</i> (1985), Chs. I & II Habermas, <i>The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity</i> (1985), Ch. XI & XII</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> McCarthy, <i>The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas</i> (1978)</p>
11/20	<p>Rorty and Habermas in Dialogue Rorty, "Universality and Truth" in <i>Rorty and His Critics</i>, ed. Brandom (2000) Habermas, "Richard Rorty's Pragmatic Turn" in <i>Rorty and His Critics</i>, ed. Brandom (2000) Rorty, "Reply to Habermas" in <i>Rorty and His Critics</i>, ed. Brandom (2000)</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Rorty, "Habermas, Derrida, and the Functions of Philosophy" (1995) Rorty, "Grandeur, Profundity, and Finitude" (2004) Habermas, "And to define America, her athletic democracy': ... In Memory of Rorty" (2008) Bernstein, "Neopragmatism" in <i>The Habermas Handbook</i>, ed. Lafont et. al. (2018)</p>
11/21 Wed.	<p>Research Papers First Version Due (in both hardcopy and digital form by 5:00p) See assignment description below.</p>
11/22	[Thanksgiving – No Class]
11/27	<p>Paper Peer Review Due (in both hardcopy to your peer and hardcopy & email to instructor) See assignment description below.</p>
11/27	<p>Furthering the Dewey-Lippmann Debate Rogers, "Constraining Elites & Managing Power," Chap. 5 of <i>The Undiscovered Dewey</i> (2009) Schudson, "The "Lippmann-Dewey Debate" and the Invention of Walter Lippmann as an Anti-Democrat" (2008)</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u> Carey, "Reconceiving 'Mass' and 'Media'" (1982) Marres, "Issues Spark a Public Into Being: ... The Lippmann-Dewey Debate" (2005) Curry Jansen, "Phantom Conflict: Lipp., Dwy., & the Fate of the Public in Modern Soc." (2009)</p>

	Bohman, "Participation through Publics: ... Dewey ... Lippmann" (2010) Russill, "Dewey/Lippmann Redux" (2016)
11/29	<p>Furthering the Rorty-Habermas Debate</p> <p>Bernstein, "Jürgen Habermas's Kantian Pragmatism" (2010) Dieleman, "The Contingent Status of Epistemic Norms: Rorty ... & Feminist Epistemologies" (2013)</p> <p><u>Recommended:</u></p> <p>Bernstein, "What is the Difference that Makes a Difference? Gadamer, Habermas, & Rorty: (1982) Bernstein, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward: ... Rorty on Lib. Dem. & Philosophy" (1987) Shusterman, "Reason & Aesthetics b/w Modernity & Postmodernity: Habermas & Rorty" (1996) Alcoff, "Philosophy's Civil Wars" (2013) Bacon, "Rorty, Irony and the Consequences of Contingency for Liberal Society" (2017) Chin, "Normative Engagement Across Difference: ... Dialogic Inclusion, & Social Practices" (2018)</p>
12/3 Mon.	<p>Revised Research Papers Due (in both hardcopy and by email Mon of Exam Week; time tbd)</p> <p>See assignment description below.</p>

Books & Texts (and how to obtain them)

You are required to purchase copies of the following texts (all are available at the UO DuckStore). You must bring your reading to class (either as hardcopy or in electronic form) in the edition listed below. Many of our texts are available in alternative editions, so please confirm the ISBN listed below before purchasing so you can check you have the right edition. For scholarly purposes, including close readings and in-class discussion of specific pages, you must acquire the edition below. There will be no tolerance for catching up people who are using a different pagination.

- John Dewey, *The Public & Its Problems* (1927), ed. by Melvin Rogers, Ohio University Press, 2016 [ISBN-13: 978-0804011662]
- Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (1922), Free Press, 1997 [ISBN-13: 978-0684833279]
- Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), Cambridge University Press, 1989 [ISBN-13: 978-0521367813]

All other *assigned* readings will be made available via our course website, as well some of the recommended literature above. As above, you must bring any assigned reading to class (either as a hardcopy or in an electronic form) in the edition supplied online.

For those looking for further reading, I would recommend you buy (or check out from the library) one of the introductory overviews listed below and make use of it as a resource throughout the term:

- Michael Bacon, *Pragmatism: An Introduction* (2012)
- Erin McKenna & Scott Pratt, *American Philosophy: From Wounded Knee to the Present* (2015)
- Cheryl Misak, *The American Pragmatists* (2013)

If you would like a more advanced interpretive overview of pragmatism, I humbly recommend:

- Colin Koopman, *Pragmatism as Transition: Historicity & Hope in James, Dewey, & Rorty* (2009)

Assessment and Required Work

1) Participation & Group Work, 10% of final grade

This course will be a seminar. It requires active participation in discussions. I expect everyone to be well-prepared at the beginning of every class session. This includes, but is not limited to, reading all assigned material in advance of the class meeting during which it will be discussed.

- *5% of grade* – You are expected to attend class and contribute to discussions. Students in this course should not expect to be able to passively attend our meetings and ‘soak up information’. Participation in this course means active involvement and engagement. As part of your participation grade, on any given day, I may ask a small group of you (selected at random, or maybe not) to initiate a discussion by starting us off with your online discussion question (see (2) below). Be prepared.
 - *Inclusive participation:* I will strive to facilitate the seminar in such a way that we have excellent conditions for excellent conversations. While I will do everything I can to make the class a welcoming environment for all, let me know if I can do anything further. It is also your responsibility to engage in class topics (especially when they involve sensitive issues) seriously, with full respect, and with utmost inclusiveness.
- *5% of grade* – Most of our class sessions will involve some form of participatory group work. You will contribute to this work (and will individually turn in evidence of your contributions).
- *Attendance policy:* You can miss up to two classes without question, but if you miss a third class your full participation grade (i.e., the full 10%) will be cut in half, and if you miss a fourth class your participation grade will be reduced to ‘0’ (i.e., you will receive an effective 10% deduction on your overall final grade if you miss four or more scheduled class sessions). (If you experience a personal medical emergency or health issue we will make a reasonable plan for you to make up this portion of your grade.)

2) Online Discussion Contributions, 10% of final grade

I expect all participants to come to class prepared with questions about, and/or disagreements with, the assigned readings for that session. Accordingly, everyone will post a single question or comment about each day’s reading to our course website by the following time: *one hour prior to the beginning of each class session*. Please keep your posts short (one paragraph maximum, with just one or two sentences as an ideal you should aim for) so that everyone can review all comments in the hour prior to class. These posts will be due beginning at our second class meeting.

- *10% of grade* – These posts will be graded pass/fail for participation rather than for quality. For each post you miss, 1/10th will be deducted from this portion of your grade (i.e., 1% of your overall class grade will be deducted), up to 10 missed posts (at which point this portion of your grade will zero out with no additional penalty for further missed posts).

3) Short Expository Paper, 15% of final grade – late work will not be accepted

In the first weeks of the class, you will write a very short expository paper in which you present a definition of pragmatism, and describe its philosophical importance. Your paper should make use of the

assigned readings from Week 1 and 2, and quote from one or more of these authors with an eye toward explaining their conception of pragmatism. The best papers will also seek out additional sources and integrate these. You can frame and title your paper in any way you see fit, but you should think of the paper as answering this question: “What is the philosophical significance of pragmatism?”

I will assess your work according to a rubric of six criteria of evaluation to be distributed in advance:

- This paper will be limited to *1000 words maximum* (the word count will be counted by the main text only and will not include bibliographic references). Your paper should not include any lengthy discursive footnotes, though you can footnote your citations if you wish.
- You are to turn this paper in online via Canvas *and* via email directly to me (koopman@uoregon.edu) in a message with the subject line “PHIL 420 expository paper”. This document must be in PDF/DOC/ODF format (no other file format will be accepted).
- The top two papers in the class will receive a grade of A+ and will be distributed to the rest of the class as examples of excellent writing and thorough comprehension.

4) Final Research Paper (in two stages), 65% of final grade – late work will not be accepted

You will write a final research paper, which will be developed and submitted in two stages as described below. I will grade both versions of your paper as if they are finalized and polished pieces of writing. I will assess your work according to a rubric of nine criteria of evaluation to be distributed in advance via a handout.

4.a) First Version of Final Paper (30% of final grade)

- *5% of grade* – At some point during week 8 or before (preferably before) you must visit my office hour and bring with you two one-paragraph pitches for papers you are interested in writing. We will discuss your ideas and determine which is the best paper for you to pursue for this class.
- *20% of grade* – You will write a short argumentative essay, due (as a hardcopy and via email to both myself and your assigned peer-review respondent) as per the schedule above.
 - You are expected to develop your own essay topic, with the sole constraint being that ***the essay must be broadly addressed to one of the two debates in pragmatist political theory that we are covering in this course***. If you are unsure about your topic, please meet me with me in office hours at least one month before the paper is due.
 - The shorter version of your paper should be about 10-12 pages (or about ***2500-3000 words*** exclusive of notes and references; with 3000 words as an upper limit). Your essay should discussed assigned primary readings as well as secondary readings (which I can help you locate during my office hour, or see the list on this syllabus).
 - Although you will revise this essay and expand it into a longer final research essay due at the end of the term, this version of the essay should be highly-polished and well-argued. You are expected to turn in a finalized piece of writing, and not a draft. You will revise this finalized piece of writing once more, but that just shows that revision is an extensive process. Think of it this way: my written feedback on your paper will be more useful to you if you turn in to me a piece of work that you think is perfect; if you turn in

something that you know to have shortcomings, then my written feedback will likely only reflect what you already know.

- *5% of grade* – You will append to your paper a bibliography that includes three short (100-word) abstracts of three pieces (individual journal articles or individual essays in collected volumes) of *secondary* literature (we will discuss the definition of this term in class) relevant to your chosen topic. It is important that you craft your paper around a topic for which some secondary literature is available. Find three sources and summarize, or abstract, them in your own words. An abstract is an executive summary of the work written in the third-person. It is not a report on your judgment of, much less your experience of, the piece you have read. It is not a description of how you will (or do) use the piece in your essay.

4.b) Peer Review Comments (5% of final grade)

- After the first version of your papers are complete, but before the final version is due, you will complete a peer review of one of your classmate's papers. This will be due in hardcopy (bring two hardcopies – one for me and one for your peer – in week 10 as per the schedule above).
- The goal of this peer-review exercise is not so much to receive additional feedback on your paper (though that is a nice bonus). The goal of the exercise is rather for you to thoroughly attend to another paper on the same subject matter and to understand what works well in the paper (and what does not).

4.c) Final Version of Final Paper (30% of final grade)

- *25% of grade* – You will then take the first version of your research essay, along with my comments, and other peer comments (if you swap with a peer, which you should), and write a final research essay. This will be due (as a hardcopy and via email) early in exam week as per the schedule above.
 - This will be a revision of and improvement upon the first version of the paper you turned in late in the term. This essay should engage with one both the assigned primary literature and relevant secondary literature.
 - The final essay should be about 12 pages in length (aim for 3000-3500 words exclusive of notes and references, i.e. a conference-length paper). Note that **3500 words is a hard limit**. I want you to do everything you can to stay within this limit because this is a typical conference-length paper limit in Philosophy.
- *5% of grade* – In addition, you must turn into me a one-page (single-space) set of revisions notes (of the kind you will be expected to submit to a journal if you get a 'revise and resubmit; I will supply an example if you request one). This will explain all major revisions you made in your paper. It will also explain any decision you have made to not institute revisions in light of reviewer (i.e., instructor, i.e., me!) comments. You should write this as a letter.

Learning Outcomes

- Develop an understanding of central contemporary debates in pragmatist philosophy, political philosophy, and metaphilosophy.
- Compare, contrast, & critique representative writers from different historical periods.
- Develop and improve your written communication skills, especially with an eye toward the synthesis of complex concepts and debates.
- Develop and improve your oral communication skills in the context of discussing dense ideas that are also potentially highly-charged within our contemporary political climate.
- Develop your abilities with a range of research methods, including collaborative group work and scholarly research skills into both primary and secondary sources and their synthesis in written form.

Additional Notes & Statements:

Grading Standards: The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon:
A = Excellent. No mistakes, well-written, well-framed, clear evidence of major research effort, and distinctive in some way or other.
B = Good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way or indicative of major research effort.
C = Acceptable. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
D = Poor or Unacceptable. Several errors, with a tenuous grasp of the material.
F = Failing. Problematic on all fronts, with no real grasp of the material, or a complete lack of effort.

Computer Use in Class: My policy for this class is that you may use laptops and tablets in class (but not cell phones, smart phones, etc.) provided that you *do not use your computers to check your email, your social network sites, shop for shoes, etc.* If need be, we will revise this policy as the class progresses. Successful use of computers in the classroom is up to you, it's not up to me. Don't abuse this privilege such that it interferes with others' enjoyment of it.

Academic Honesty: The instructor reserves the right to assign a grade of 'F' for the course to students who engage in any acts of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to:

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, one certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. Verbatim statements by others must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from the regular text as indented extracts. Students will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever: 1) one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product; 2) one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one's own words; 3) one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material—unless the information is common knowledge. Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise prepared totally or in part by another person, even if that person is acting as a tutor or editor (and ends up substantially producing part of the work). If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the Tutoring and Academic Engagement Services team (Knight Library, 4th Floor).

Fabrication: Fabrication is the intentional use of information that the author has invented when he or she states or implies otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples include, but are not limited to: 1) citing information not taken from the source indicated; 2) listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise; 3) inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercises.

Cheating: Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise. Examples include but are not limited to: 1) copying from another student's work; 2) collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one's work in a test situation; 3) using the course textbook or other material not authorized for use during a test; 4) using unauthorized material during a test; for example, notes, formula lists, cues on a computer, photographs, symbolic representations, and notes written on clothing; 5) resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor; 6) taking a test for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you.