

Pragmatism

CONTACT INFORMATION

cfranks@nd.edu; Malloy 411; Wednesday 11–2pm and by appointment

THIS COURSE

In this seminar, we will try to understand the philosophical attitude known as pragmatism, with special attention to its historical roots in the 19th Century in the United States, its development in the 20th Century and adaptation outside the US, and its relationship to allied “naturalistic” movements within philosophy and social and scientific developments outside of philosophy.

REQUIREMENTS

All students are expected to be active members of the seminar, engaged in discussion on a weekly basis. Students seeking a grade will also write three short essays, one of which will be rewritten and further developed into a term paper.

READINGS

We will read a wide range of essays and excerpts from such writers as Peirce, Holmes, West, Maddy, Misak, Rorty, Quine, Addams, Du Bois, Locke, Ramsey, and Haack. I will circulate the material as needed. The books we will read in whole are

- *The Metaphysical Club* by Louis Menand
- *Pragmatism and The Meaning of Truth* by William James
- *The Quest for Certainty* by John Dewey

It is a good idea to make sure you have access to a copy of those books that suits you. They are all freely available either online or through the Hesburgh Library, but you might prefer a physical copy.

GRADES

Your grade will be determined as follows:

- quality of first essay, 15%
- quality of first period seminar participation, 10%
- quality of second essay, 15%
- quality of second period seminar participation, 10%
- quality of third essay, 15%
- quality of third period seminar participation, 10%
- quality of term paper, 25%

I understand that different people have different temperaments and styles of engagement, just as they have different interests and styles of writing. So I have neither specific expectations for the form of your essays nor particular ways that I will evaluate your participation. But to succeed in a seminar, you must be more than a passive recipient of information. Find ways to help determine the direction of our discussions, ask questions about things that are puzzling to you, help classmates pursue the lines of thought that they are articulating, etc. In general, make the most of the fact that you have an opportunity to learn together with a small group of other bright and curious people who are interested in and reading the same things you are.

NOTE

Please be aware of the University's policies regarding academic honesty, anti-discrimination, and access to education for students with disabilities.

Here is the web-page of the office for students with disabilities:

<http://www.nd.edu/~osd/NEWHOMEPAGE.htm>

Here is the Philosophy Department's web-page devoted to academic honesty, with links to information about plagiarism and the University's honor code:

<http://philosophy.nd.edu/undergraduate-program/honesty/>

In addition I am someone you can approach if you have concerns about discrimination or proper scholarly behavior, whether or not the concern is related to this course.

IMPORTANT DATES

Feb 15	1st essay due
March 7	2nd essay due
April 11	3rd essay due
April 23	no class
April 30	no class
May 10	term paper due