

PHI 810: Seminar in the History of Philosophy — Spring Semester 2009

Instructor: Paul B. Thompson Office: 526 S. Kedzie Hall (330 Natural Resources Building)

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The seminar will focus on the thought of John Dewey, with a special emphasis on Dewey's ethics. More than many philosophers, however, Dewey's approach to ethics cannot be separated from his larger philosophical corpus. As such, the course readings will encompass a wide range of topics. Historically, Dewey's approach to ethics and values will be situated with respect to three other pragmatists, C.S. Peirce, William James and especially Jane Addams, as well as with respect to the nineteenth-century tradition of idealism that was Dewey's initial philosophical starting point. Readings will also include contemporary commentaries on Dewey.

Required Texts:

Larry Hickman & Thomas Alexander, Eds. *The Essential Dewey* 2 volumes, Bloomington, IN: 1998, U. Indiana Press

Jennifer Welchman, *John Dewey's Ethical Thought*, Ithaca, NY: 1995, Cornell University Press.

Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*, with a new "Introduction" by Charlene Haddock Seigfried, Urbana, IL: 2002, University of Illinois Press

Highly Recommended Texts:

Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, Ithaca, NY: 1993, Cornell University Press

James Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence*. Chicago, IL: 1995, Open Court Publishing Co.

Larry Hickman, *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology* Bloomington, IN: 1989, U. Indiana Press.

Course Requirements. Students are expected to attend scheduled class sessions and be prepared to discuss assigned readings. All students will be required to complete two short written out-of-class essay assignments during the semester and to present a précis of a key reading once during the semester. The first assignment will be announced Feb. 2, 2009 and will be due in class Feb. 9, 2009. The second assignment will be announced March 2, 2009 and will be due March 16, 2009. In addition, all students must complete a research paper on a topic closely related to the theme of the seminar and to be approved by the instructor. Please schedule a time to meet on your paper topic by contacting Julie Eckinger: jeckingr@msu.edu or 2-0317. Meetings on paper topics should be held no later than April 10. The research paper is due May 4, 2009 by 8:00 pm.

Grades: Attendance for at least 11 of the 14 class sessions, plus completion of written and oral requirements is necessary to receive a passing grade for the course. I will offer comments on written work, but will not assign grades to précis or written assignments. Students who meet requirement attendance requirements and complete their précis and written assignments will receive a course grade based upon the work they complete for their research paper.

Course Calendar

- Jan. 12, 2009 Beginnings. We begin with the seminal articles of pragmatism: C. S. Peirce's "The Fixation of Belief" and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," and William James' "What Pragmatism Means," along with pp. 3-36 from *The Essential Dewey, Vol. I*. These pages contain articles that Dewey wrote on Peirce and James and on the development of his own thought.
- Jan. 19, 2009 is Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Classes are not held.
- Jan. 26, 2009 Dewey's Metaphysics. Pp. 113-226 from *The Essential Dewey, Vol. I*
- Feb. 2, 2009 The Philosophical Context: Idealism: Selections from Josiah Royce's "Lectures on Idealism," and "The Hope of the Great Community; F.H. Bradley's "My Station and It's Duties"
- Feb. 9, 2009 Dewey on Education, Community and Democracy. Pp. 229-343 from *The Essential Dewey, Vol. I*
- Feb. 16, 2009 The Social Context: Jane Addams' Ethics Jane Addams *Democracy and Social Ethics*
- Feb. 23, 2009 Pragmatism and Culture Pp. 347-410 from *The Essential Dewey, Vol. I* plus Charlene Siegfried's "introduction" to *Democracy and Social Ethics*
- Mar. 2, 2009 Habit, Conduct and Language Pp. 3-87 from *The Essential Dewey, Vol. II*
- Mar. 9, 2009 is Spring Break. Classes are not held.
- Mar. 16, 2009 Dewey's Epistemology. Pp. 91-221 from *The Essential Dewey, Vol. II*
- Mar. 23, 2009 Dewey's Ethics, Part I. Pp. 225-298 from *The Essential Dewey, Vol. II*
- Mar. 30, 2009 Jennifer Welchman on Dewey's Ethics. Pp. 147-218 from *Dewey's Ethical Thought*, and "Dewey and McDowell on Naturalism, Values, and Second Nature"
- Apr. 6, 2009 Dewey's Ethics, Part II Pp. 299-354 from *The Essential Dewey, Vol. II*, Chapter 4 from James Campbell's *Understanding Dewey*
- Apr. 13, 2009 Rorty and Putnam on Dewey's Ethics. Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism," and Hilary Putnam, "Intelligence and Ethics"
- Apr. 20, 2009 John McDermott on Dewey's Ethics. John McDermott, "A Relational World: The Significance of the Thought of William James and John Dewey for Global Culture," "Isolation as Starvation: John Dewey and a Philosophy of the Handicapped," "The Gamble for Excellence: John Dewey's Pedagogy of Experience," and "What Does It Mean to Have an Ethics," by Paul Thompson
- Apr. 27, 2009 Reconstructing Philosophy. Pp. 39-112 from *The Essential Dewey, Vol. I* and John J. McDermott, "The Cultural Immortality of Philosophy as Human Drama"
- May 4, 2009 Dewey and Environmental Pragmatism: Recent work on Dewey by environmental pragmatists, Tentative time: 8-10 pm (This class meets in final exam week.)