PHI 810: Seminar in the History of Philosophy — Spring Semester 2009
Instructor: Paul B. Thompson Office: 526 S. Kedzie Hall (330 Natural Resources Building)
Phone: 432 0516 e-mail: thomp649@msu.edu Contact Julie Eckinger jeckingr@msu.edu to
determine my whereabouts.

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

Highly Recommended Texts:
Press
James Campbell, Understanding John Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence. Chicago, IL:
1995, Open Court Publishing Co.

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 2-0517. 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 12 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. 19, 2009  is Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Classes are not held.


Feb. 16, 2009  The Social Context: Jane Addams’ Ethics. Jane Addams Democracy and Social Ethics


Mar. 9, 2009  is Spring Break. Classes are not held.


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


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.)