

# The American Pragmatists

Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy  
*Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München*  
Winter 2015/16

---

Instructor: Dr. Gregory Wheeler  
Office: Ludwigstr. 31, Room 131  
Office Hours: *By Appointment*

Classroom: Ludwigstr. 31, 021  
Time: Wednesday, 14:00–16:00, ct  
Coursesite: [gregorywheeler.coursesites.com](http://gregorywheeler.coursesites.com)  
E-Mail: [gregory.wheeler@lrz.uni-muenchen.de](mailto:gregory.wheeler@lrz.uni-muenchen.de)

## Course Description

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of the classical American pragmatists: *Charles Sanders Peirce*, *William James*, and *John Dewey*.

## Required Texts

- Dewey, J. (1960). *The Quest for Certainty*. Gifford Lectures of 1929. New York: Capricorn Books.
- James, W. (2000). *Pragmatism and Other Writings*. Edited by Giles Gunn. London: Penguin Classics.
- Peirce, C. S. (1955). *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*. Edited by Justus Buchler. New York: Dover.

## Course Requirements

There are three requirements for the course: (1) Approximately ten weekly written assignments (“Weeklies”), submitted online at [gregorywheeler.coursesites.com](http://gregorywheeler.coursesites.com); (2) in-class participation; (3) four short (~2000 word) philosophical essays. All assignments are to be completed in English.

1. *Weeklies*: These assignments may either ask you to formulate one or two questions or objections in short but clear and precise prose on assigned readings, or answer particular questions on the readings. These assignments will be graded anonymously. Your weekly assignments may be viewed as an opportunity to “vet” points to discuss in-class questions that you have about each week’s readings. Instructions for each weekly will be given online.
2. *In-class participation*: The weekly assignments and feedback on those assignments are designed to prime in-class discussion. You will be evaluated by the quality, rather than quantity, of your contributions to class discussion.
3. *Short papers*: You are required to write three short paper assignments for the course, each **no longer than** 2000 words. You will be penalized for going over this limit. In addition, you have the option to rewriting one of your essays and I will use the highest 3 marks from these 4 essays to determine this portion of your grade. These assignments are designed to help you to economize your writing, since you *only* have 2000 words with which to make a clear argument and substantive philosophical point.

## Online Registration

To access course materials and submit papers and weekly assignments, students must register for *Models and Simulations in Social Epistemology* online at [gregorywheeler.coursesites.com](http://gregorywheeler.coursesites.com).

To register for the course, [email me to receive an invitation to join the course](#).

## Grading

Your final grade will be calculated by a weighted average using the following weights:

Class Participation: 10%

Weeklies: 15%

Best Three-of-Four Short Papers (each 2000 words or less): 75%

## Course Schedule

WEEK	TOPIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ READINGS</li> <li>● PAPER DUE DATES</li> </ul>
(1) OCT 14	Introduction to Pragmatism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduction, (Peirce 1955)</li> <li>○ Introduction, (James 2000)</li> <li>○ 'Pragmatism,' <i>Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy</i></li> </ul>
(2) OCT 21	Introduction to Peirce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'The Fixation of Belief' in (Peirce 1955)</li> <li>○ 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear'</li> </ul>
(3) OCT 28	Peirce on Fallibilism & Certainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'The Scientific Attitude and Fallibilism'</li> </ul>
(4) NOV 4	Peirce on Logic & Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'The Criterion of Validity in Reasoning'</li> <li>○ 'What is a Leading Principle?'</li> <li>○ 'The Nature of Mathematics'</li> </ul>
(5) NOV 11	Peirce on Methods in the Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'Abduction &amp; Induction'</li> <li>● <i>Paper 1 on Peirce Due</i></li> </ul>
(6) NOV 18	James: Against Scientism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'The Will to Believe' in (James 2000)</li> <li>○ 'Is Life Worth Living?'</li> </ul>
(7) NOV 25	NO CLASS	
(8) DEC 2	James: How Ethical Theories Arise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life'</li> <li>○ 'Philosophical Concepts and Practical Results,' <i>Internet Archive</i></li> </ul>
(9) DEC 9	James' Articulation of Pragmatism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'The Present Dilemma in Philosophy'</li> <li>○ 'What Pragmatism Means'</li> <li>○ 'Some Metaphysical Problems Pragmatically Considered'</li> <li>○ 'The One and the Many'</li> </ul>
(10) DEC 16	James' Articulation of Pragmatism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pragmatism and Common Sense</li> <li>○ 'Pragmatism's Conception of Truth'</li> <li>○ 'Pragmatism and Humanism'</li> <li>○ 'Pragmatism and Religion'</li> </ul>
(11) JAN 13	Dewey's Gifford Lectures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'Escape from Peril' in (Dewey 1960)</li> <li>○ 'Philosophy's Search for the Immutable'</li> <li>○ 'Conflict of Authorities'</li> <li>● <i>Paper 2 on James Due</i></li> </ul>
(12) JAN 20	Dewey's Gifford Lectures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'The Art of Acceptance and the Art of Control'</li> <li>○ 'Ideas at Work'</li> </ul>
(13) JAN 27	Dewey's Gifford Lectures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Play of Ideas</li> <li>○ The Seat of Intellectual Authority</li> <li>○ The Naturalization of Intelligence</li> </ul>
(14) FEB 3	Dewey's Gifford Lectures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'The Supremacy of Method'</li> <li>○ 'The Construction of Good'</li> <li>○ 'The Copernican Revolution'</li> <li>● <i>Paper 3 on Dewey Due</i></li> </ul>
FEB 26		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Rewritten Paper Due</i></li> </ul>